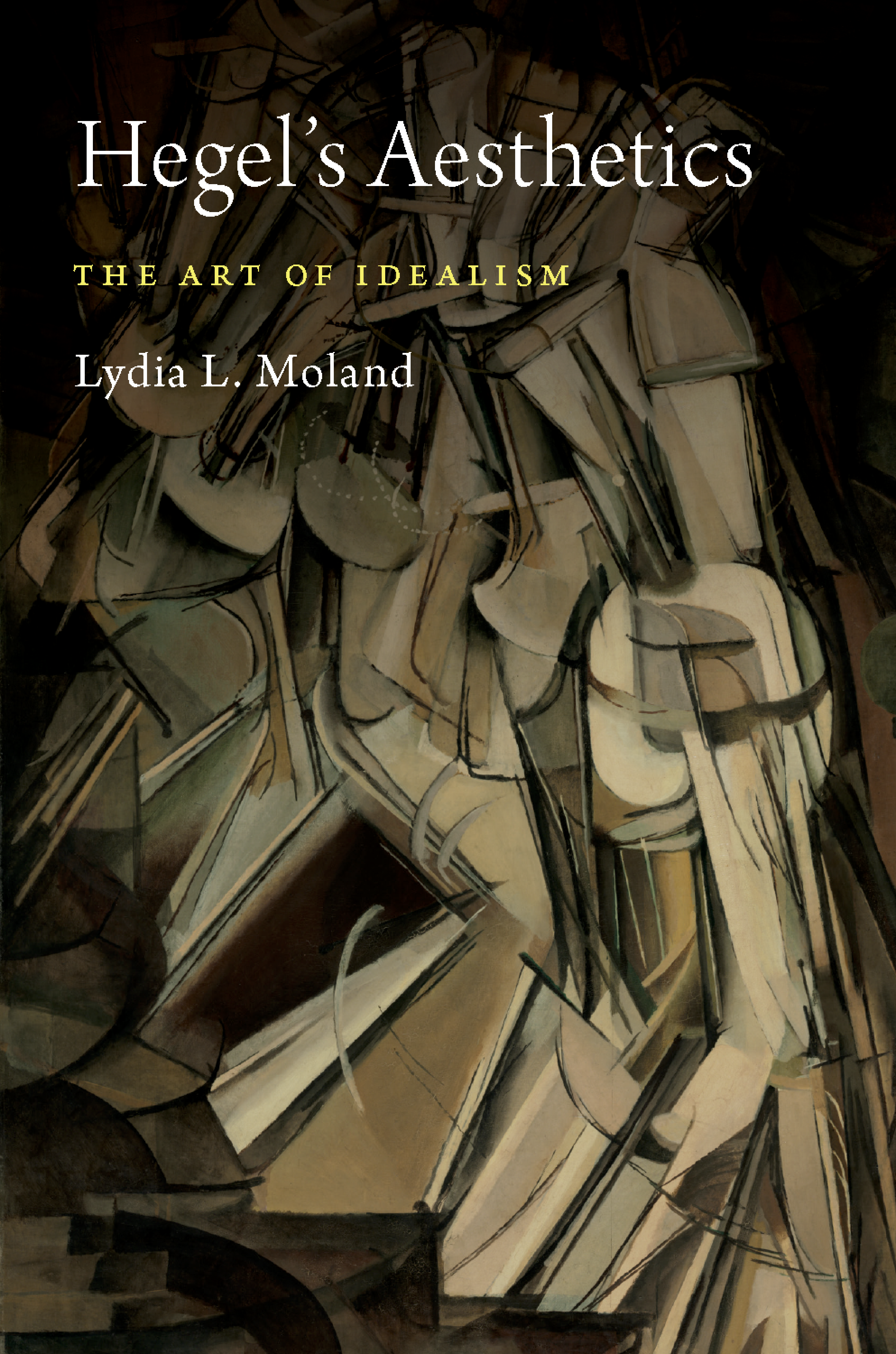
Hegel's Aesthetics

THE ART OF IDEALISM

Lydia L. Moland



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For Jim

Du bist die Ruh

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Abbreviations

STANDARD TEXTS BY HEGEL

Unless otherwise indicated, all German references are to G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*. Edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–71.

Ä:I–III:	*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik, I–III. Werke*, Vols. 13–15. English translation: (1975). *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Translated by T. M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Citations are to German volume and page number followed by English page number.
EL:	*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse: Die Wissenschaft der Logik. Werke*, Vol. 8. English translation: (1991). *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett.
EN:	*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften: Die Naturphilosophie. Werke*, Vol. 9.
EPG:	*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften: Die Philosophie des Geistes. Werke*, Vol. 10. English translation: (1971). *Philosophy of Mind*. Translated by A. V. Miller and William Wallace. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Text from the *Zusätze* is indicated by a "Z."
FS:	*Frühe Schriften. Werke*, Vol. 1.
PdG:	*Phänomenologie des Geistes. Werke*, Vol. 3. English translation: (2018). *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by Terry Pinkard. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

PR: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts. Werke*, Vol. 7.
English translation: (1991). *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Translated by H. S. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

VGP: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I. Werke*, Vol. 18.
English translation: (1995). *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: Plato and the Platonists*. Translated by E. S. Haldane and Francis H. Simpson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
Citations are to German volume and page number followed by English page number.

VPG: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte. Werke*, Vol. 12.
English translation: (1991). *The Philosophy of History*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
Citations are to German page number followed by English page number.

VRel: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion II. Werke*, Vol. 17.
English translation: (1987). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: Determinate Religion*. Translated by R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Citations are to German page number followed by English page number.

STUDENT TRANSCRIPTIONS FROM HEGEL'S LECTURES ON ART

All pages from individual lecture transcripts are cited *by manuscript page number*.

A20: (2015). Wintersemester 1820/21. Nachschrift Wilhelm von Ascheberg und Willem Sax van Terborg. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst*. Edited by Niklas Hebing. *Gesammelte Werke* 28(1): 1–214. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

H23: (2015). Sommersemester 1823: Nachschrift Heinrich Gustav Hotho. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst.*

Edited by Niklas Hebing. *Gesammelte Werke* 28(1): 215–511. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

See also: (2003). *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst (Mitschrift Hotho 1823)*. Edited by Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

English translation: (2014). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*. Translated by Robert F. Brown. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

K26: (2004). *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik (Mitschrift von Kehler 1826)*. Edited by Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

For another transcript of the 1826 lectures, see: (2004). *Philosophie der Kunst (Mitschrift von der Pfordten 1826)*. Edited by Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Jeong-Im Kwon, and Karsten Berr. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Hm28: (2017). *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik: Vorlesungsmitschrift Adolf Heimann (1828/1829)*. Edited by Alain Patrick Olivier and Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Introduction

The Scope and Significance of Hegel's Aesthetics

It is one of the ironies of Hegel's reputation that he is credited with being both the father of art history and the prophet of art's end. The first claim, however exaggerated, has ensured Hegel's place in the art history he purportedly inaugurated.[1] But it is his claim that art ends—his so-called end of art thesis—that has, in a second irony, guaranteed the longevity of Hegel's philosophy of art within the field of aesthetics. This claim has prompted ample and sometimes agitated misinterpretations among those scandalized by its synthesis of provocation and implausibility.[2] It has proven an irresistible puzzle to generations of Hegel scholars. It has meant that both analytic and continental philosophers, as well as art theorists themselves, have continued to grapple with Hegel's philosophy of art. It provided Arthur Danto with a fertile explanation for contemporary art, beginning with Andy Warhol's ready-mades and continuing through artists as foreign to Hegel's sensibility as Yoko Ono and Damien Hirst.[3]

This sustained interest, however, has not produced a common understanding of what Hegel means by art's end. The resulting lack of clarity, I will argue, hampers not only our understanding of Hegel's philosophy of art but also of the philosophical system he called idealism. It additionally prevents us from fully employing Hegel's theory in the analysis of contemporary art today. In the interest of addressing these limitations, my aim is to show how Hegel's theory of art is informed by his philosophical idealism. But it is equally to show how a fuller understanding of Hegel's theory of art allows us to understand his idealism better. Hegel's aesthetics, I will argue, illuminates his theories of the senses, selfhood, perception, and recognition. His discussion of the development of art through history indicates how humans' understanding of the divine is crucial to their role in normativity. His analysis of architecture and sculpture reveals his definition of articulated space as opposed to spiritual, embodied individuality; his discussions of painting, music, and poetry all inform our understanding of what he means by subjectivity and the inner life. Hegel scholarship has often neglected this rich resource. Literature on his analysis of feeling, for instance, ignores its substantial treatment in Hegel's theory of music; scholarship on his theory of imagination neglects his discussion of poetry.

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[1] Gombrich (1984), 59. Quoted in Pippin (2014), 18.

[2] Perhaps the most egregious is Croce's description of Hegel as having a "necrology" of art. See Croce (1906), 130 and Donougho (2007), 181.

[3] Danto (2005), 69–76, 53–60.

I will also claim, somewhat controversially, that Hegel's is what Paul Guyer calls an "aesthetics of truth."[4] Robert Pippin recently has sought to distance Hegel from such a classification, arguing that Hegel explicitly denied the claim made by "rationalist, classicist, and perfectionist aesthetics" that aesthetic experience occurs when "'separable' ideals are dimly if pleasantly intimated in sensuous experience." Pippin is right that Hegel rejects such theories insofar as they characterize aesthetic pleasure as a response to pre-ordained divine or rational truth. But Hegel did, I will argue, think that aesthetic experience is the sensuous experience of truth—in his case, idealist truth. That truth, however—and here I agree with Pippin—is not a separable, pre-determined or even static truth in the sense suggested by rationalist aesthetics. It is based instead on the mutual recognition and transformation that underlies Hegel's philosophy. The artistic process, the art object itself, and our experience of that object all embody Hegel's claim that objects are not in fact independent, waiting to be apprehended, but that we and the world's objects are part of a mutually determining whole. We are implicitly involved in this mutually formative process throughout our lives. Art is one way of making that process explicit. The resulting experience of truth is, I will argue, the foundation of aesthetic pleasure. This claim, too, is controversial since Hegel famously—and in striking distinction from Kant—seems uninterested in explaining the nature of aesthetic experience.[5] I hope nevertheless in the course of this book to suggest what he, however implicitly, took aesthetic experience to be.

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[4] Guyer (2014), 423. Guyer's other categories include the aesthetics of play and the aesthetics of emotional impact.

Hegel outlines his aesthetic theory over the course of the three major sections of his lectures on fine art. In the process, he approaches art from two distinct perspectives and considers a daunting array of detail. A primary aim of this book is to give a sense of this entire trajectory. There has been a steady increase of scholarship on Hegel's philosophy of art in recent decades, but none has attempted to consider the entire range of his thought. I argue that we do not understand Hegel's philosophy of art, including his claim about art's end, unless we consider it in its entirety. I aim also to explain Hegel's sometimes surprising examples, contextualize his often bewildering minutiae, and elucidate terms he leaves unclear. Only this level of comprehensiveness, in my view, allows us fully to understand his end of art thesis and the way his philosophy of art informs and is informed by his idealism.

Two overall aims of this book, then, are to show the relevance of Hegel's aesthetics for understanding his idealism and to clarify the senses in which Hegel talks about the end of art. In order to set the stage for these aims, preliminary accounts of both are in order. I will then give a brief introduction to the historical context in which Hegel wrote about art and discuss the sources.

1. Idealism and Aesthetics

What does Hegel mean when he calls his system an "absolute idealism"? The literature on this question is vast; I reduce it to the following points whose evidence will be provided in the book's argument.[6]

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[5] See Pippin (2008a).

[6] Hegel uses the term "absolute idealism" for instance at *EL*, §160. For an overview and history of absolute idealism, see Beiser (2002), 349ff. Hegel's own use of the term

First: Hegel's idealism implies a *holism*. Hegel famously claims that the true is the whole (*PdG*, ¶20). Individual objects must be recognized not as ontologically separate but as parts of that whole. The recognition of this truth is what Hegel calls the *identity of identity and difference* or *the unity of unity and division.*[7] This also means that Hegel's is a philosophy of reconciliation: the whole is originally sundered by division, but ultimately, the elements of division are again united.

Hegel's idealism *rules out any non-conceptual content* or, in contemporary philosophical parlance, *any given*. This means, among other things, that Hegel opposes theorists who claim that the senses, feelings, or intellectual intuition are capable of delivering non-conceptual content. Hegel's opposition to the given has been central in discussions of his philosophy since Robert Brandom and John McDowell's influential interpretations of Hegel's system, but it often remains unclear what exactly falls under this concept.[8] Hegel's theory of art helps us understand the range of things "given" might mean, from sensations to our bodies to feelings to norms. Art also, I will argue, is on Hegel's view one of the ways we can resist the given. It facilitates this resistance, to put Hegel's complex thought into everyday language, by making the familiar strange: by interrupting our habitual interaction with the world, in which we think of the world as given, and allowing us to sense our participation in it.

As part of its rejection of the given, Hegel's idealism also rules out any natural or divine sources of authority. Ultimately humans must accept that they, as the creators and interpreters of meaning, are the *only divine there is*. Hegel's idealism will thus insist on humans recognizing themselves as the divine. In many cases, enabling humans to understand this claim will involve making the strange familiar: prompting

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"idealism" is notoriously loose; see Pippin (1989), 6. For a recent distinction between metaphysical and epistemological idealism, see Kreines (2015), 25–26.

[7] As is the case with many of Hegel's terms, these pairings occur in different ways at different points of his dialectic. One exemplary section is the *Encyclopedia Logic*'s "Essence as Ground of Existence," which encompasses sections on identity (*Identität*), difference (*Unterschied*), and ground (*Grund*), which Hegel describes as the "truth of what distinction and identity have shown themselves to be" (*EL*, §§115–122).

[8] One locus of this exchange is McDowell (1999) and Brandom (1999); another is Pippin (2005), 186–220 and McDowell (2007).

us to see that what seems foreign and divine is actually a product of our own activities. This aspect of Hegel's idealism will be especially evident in Part II.

Hegel's idealism also implies a *mutual determination* as the foundation of both ontology and epistemology. This mutual determination begins at the most fundamental levels of Hegel's system: being and nothing, as we will see, determine each other; the same is true of logic and nature, of subject and object, of minds and bodies, and of human beings in their quest for mutual recognition. This mutual determination is also a version of his rejection of the given: the world is not simply pre-existing, waiting for human knowledge to grasp it. Instead, humans—in cooperation with each other and their surroundings—mutually form reality. The nature of this mutual formation is much contested. Hegel's idealism has sometimes been caricatured as claiming that physical objects—rocks, trees, buildings—are dependent on human thought. More plausible readings, such as Stephen Houlgate's, suggest that although natural objects pre-exist humans, their conceptual status *as objects*—the treeness of trees or rockness of rocks—requires humans' conceptual activity. Terry Pinkard instead argues that Hegel's idealism is nothing more than an account of how the world "shows up" for creatures like us—how it appears salient to beings with our particular interests.[9] I will argue that Hegel's philosophy of art helps us clarify what he means by this mutually informing process. We do not create objects wholesale, but we transform entities confronting us into objects and negotiate normative structures with other humans. In the process, we are also transformed ourselves.

This mutual determination also provides the basis for Hegel's *theory of freedom*. Just as Hegel objected to Kant's suggestion of a noumenal realm, he objected to Kant's inference that human freedom exists in another sphere. Freedom is, as we see especially in the *Philosophy of Right*, instead a process of mutual determination and formation, of transforming and being transformed; it requires working with constraints such as nature, other humans' desires, historical meanings, and social norms. Because humans are the ones who understand this, we can be fully, consciously *self-determining*: we know ourselves to be the kinds of creatures we are and understand that this knowledge has consequences for our moral and political lives. Art, I will argue, helps us experience this freedom on the level of individual self-understanding and on a broader social level as well.

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[9] See Houlgate (2006) and Pinkard (2017), 7–8.

Different parts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics emphasize different aspects of this definition: all are part of his idealism, but how they guide the many aspects of art's analysis—from its progression of worldviews to its differentiation among individual arts—will vary. Understanding the presence of these themes will, I hope, illuminate both Hegel's philosophy of art and his idealism in general.

2. The End of History and the Ends of Art

Before turning to Hegel's lectures on art to make this argument, I would like to address two major interpretive questions about Hegel's philosophy. The first concerns Hegel's thesis about the end of art. Why does Hegel claim that art "no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations sought in it, and found in it alone," that it is now a "thing of the past" or that it dissipates, collapses, or peters out (*Ä:I*, 24/10, *Ä:I*, 25/11)?[10]

One recent suggestion appears in Robert Pippin's *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism*. There Pippin makes two claims that, together, suggest why art's importance has diminished. The first is that Hegel thought that the institutions of modern ethical life represented “the achievement of reconciled relations of genuinely mutual recognitional status” and that there was therefore “nothing substantial left to be ‘worked out’ ” in the way we “make claims on each other and about the world.”[11] The second is that art in Hegel’s theory is essentially a reflection of the “struggle for collective understanding” especially as regards “the realization of human freedom.”[12] It follows that if art is primarily a reflection of our struggle for freedom but that struggle has been “overcome” by mutual recognition, there will be nothing else for art to accomplish.[13] If this were true—if recognition had been achieved and art had consequently ended in this way—there would be, in Danto’s memorable phrase, little to do but “hang out.”[14] But since the assertion that there is “no residual irrationality” in modern ethical life is, as Pippin rightly claims, “clearly false,” Hegel’s theory of art must be amended to make sense of the development of art since Hegel’s lifetime.

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[10] Compare *Ä:II*, 220/593; A20, 17; K26, 287. According to Dieter Henrich, art's end occurs when philosophy takes over its mission and makes it redundant. This is sometimes known as the "pessimistic" reading of Hegel's aesthetics. Danto instead argues that art's end means that its rules are no longer binding, liberating art to become whatever it chooses to be—a more "optimistic" reading. Martin Donougho identifies a nuanced series of ways Hegel spoke of art's "pastness," ranging from its decreased religious importance to art criticism's increased importance. There is, to be sure, overlap in these positions, and Donougho discusses both Henrich and Danto. See Henrich (1985), Danto (1991), and Donougho (2007). As will become clear, I agree with Donougho that we should understand Hegel as speaking of the end (or pastness) of art in a variety of ways, but my classification will differ from his. See also Houlgate (1997).

If Hegel had indeed argued that the struggle for freedom had ended and, with it, the need for art, Pippin would be right to count it among his greatest failings.[15] Pippin’s own field-defining account of Hegel’s practical philosophy suggests that he finds Hegel less guilty of this charge than it appears: he gives ample evidence elsewhere that Hegel knew that all was not as it should be.[16] But as stated here, Hegel’s position on the modern world appears, as Pippin puts it, “prematurely optimistic,” not to say hopelessly naïve: not just with regard to the unimaginably bloody wars and global conflict since his lifetime, but also as regards the countless people, in Hegel's time and our own, who are not well served by modern institutions.[17] If it were true that art is essentially defined by our struggle to realize freedom and that Hegel believed such struggle was no longer needed, Pippin would be correct that rescuing Hegel's theory of art requires interpreting Hegel's philosophy "*magré lui.*"[18] Pippin in fact proceeds to give a riveting interpretation of just this kind, showing Hegel's theory—despite its author's apparent naïveté—to be capable of parsing the work of modernist painters such as Manet with surprising effectiveness, thus showing Hegel to be, again *magré lui*, "*the* theorist of modernism."[19]

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[11] Pippin (2014), 36–37.

[12] Ibid., 17.

[13] Ibid., 38.

[14] Danto (1986), 113. Danto similarly claims that “philosophy is something that will have no post-historical phase, for when the truth is found, there is nothing further to do” (ibid., 210). I think this claim is both incorrect as an interpretation of Hegel and implausible as a general sense of what philosophy does.

[15] Pippin (2014), 60.

[16] Pippin, for instance, quotes Hegel as asking, in the *Encyclopedia*, “Who is not acute enough to see a great deal in his own surroundings which is really far from being as it ought to be?” Pippin continues: “This must mean that he thinks there is some work to be done in support of any claim that a modern institution is rational” (Pippin 2008b, 243). See also Pippin’s argument that Hegel does not think historical change is guaranteed to be progressive and his assertion that “Hegel does not of course mean that any modern institution, just by being modern, can be said to represent the actualization of freedom” (ibid., 237, 242).

But Hegel to my mind is not guilty of this kind of naïveté and so does not need rescuing from it. The institutions of modern ethical life that Hegel describes in the *Philosophy of Right* are, to begin with, aspirational. They did not exist in Hegel's Prussia or anywhere else. They represent what Hegel thought would enable citizens to realize concrete freedom, but Hegel clearly thought that achieving them would take effort. His fear that something like relativism would undermine society is evident in his description of conscience; his concern about rampant capitalism is articulated in his description of civil society; his awareness of the dangers of nationalism is evident in his stipulation that a *Volk*'s claim to autonomy should be conditional on its commitment to freedom.[20] Rational, recognitive institutions had in fact not been attained, and Hegel was clear that it would take significant work to attain them.

Determining what Hegel thought had and had not been accomplished in the modern world leads directly to the second interpretive question, namely what Hegel means by his equally notorious claim that history has ended. Like his "end of art" thesis, Hegel's "end of history" thesis has been the cause of numerous implausible conclusions: for instance, that Hegel thought there would be no more historical development, or that he himself was history's culmination.[21] A more reasonable interpretation might again assert that since Hegel thought mutual recognition had been achieved in modern institutions, there would be nothing more in history to "work out." I have said why I think this view cannot be attributed to Hegel as regards art; the same argument holds as regards history. But if Hegel did not think freedom had been realized in modern institutions, what did he mean by the end of history? And what might that tell us about what Hegel means by the end of art?

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[17] Pippin (2014), 61.

[18] Ibid., 38. See similar claims at ibid., 44, 96.

[19] Ibid., 38.

[20] I argue for each of these claims in Moland (2011a).

[21] Possible locations of Hegel's "end of history" claim are at *VPG*, 414/342 and 524/442. For Danto's claim that Hegel thought that "history really had come to its fulfillment in him," see Danto (1986), 204.

History philosophically conceived, Hegel tells us, is the "history of the consciousness of freedom" (*VPG*, 32/19). This consciousness has evolved—as Hegel will also illustrate in his discussion of particular art forms—from inadequate understandings to a more adequate understanding. Ancient Asian cultures, Hegel claims, knew that one person, namely the emperor, was free. Certain societies in ancient Greece concluded that some humans, excluding slaves, were free. Only in the modern world has the claim that all humans are free been widely accepted. With this realization, Hegel then argues, "the end of days is fully come" (*VPG*, 414/342).[22]

This claim signals neither that there would be no more history nor that what happened next would somehow not count as history. Instead, it signals the *conceptual* end of the historical progression just outlined: from one human being free to some being free to all being free. History ends here in the sense that there is nowhere to go, conceptually, beyond "all." After this realization, history will be the working out of what we mean by our claim that all humans are free. And this, to state the obvious, is a daunting and ever-changing task. How we guarantee that humans are treated with dignity and respect in an evolving world where technology develops, social norms shift, and political conflicts rage is far from clear. The fact that humans have articulated freedom as fundamental to being human also in no way guarantees that they will *act* on this claim. History has been and will be a record of our more and less successful attempts to implement that claim concretely in the institutions of ethical life. There is, then, still much—we might say everything—to be done in history.

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[22] For a recent comprehensive interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history, see Pinkard (2017).

If true, this argument has two consequences for our understanding of Hegel's philosophy of art. The first is that it will not be the case, even on Hegel's description, that there is nothing more for art to do. Art can and does continue to facilitate reflection on social and historical conditions—a fact made clear by Pippin's analysis of Manet but also evident in contemporary art from Kara Walker's sinister silhouettes to Glenn Ligon's muddled stenciling. If we reinterpret Hegel's end of history thesis as I have suggested, this ongoing reflection is successful not despite Hegel's own theory but because of it. By extension: insofar as art indeed tracks our understanding of freedom (a point I will qualify in what follows), if there is everything left to do in history, there is everything left to do in art.

Secondly, the end of history as *conceptual* provides a model for thinking about what Hegel means by the end of art. Art in Hegel's description has two developmental trajectories: from symbolic to classical to romantic as *particular forms* of art (found in Part II), and from architecture through sculpture, painting, music, and poetry as *individual* arts (found in Part III). Both of these developments produce, I will argue, a series of conceptual ends similar to history's conceptual end. Among the particular art forms in Part II, symbolic art ends as it dialectically transitions into classical art; classical art ends as it transitions into romantic art. Romantic art reaches the *final conceptual end of the particular art forms* when it exhausts the conceptual possibilities of humans' understanding of truth. In Part III we find the *conceptual end of each individual art* as architecture transitions into sculpture, sculpture into painting, painting into music, and music into poetry. The *final conceptual end of the individual arts* occurs when poetry exhausts art's conceptual possibilities.

These conceptual endings are not to be confused with what is arguably art's most profound end, namely its *historical end*. Classical artists, we will see Hegel argue in Chapter 3, gave the Greeks their gods. Classical Greek religion was therefore fundamentally artistic. Christianity, by insisting on Jesus's historical birth and physical embodiment, removes the divine from the poetic sphere and locates it instead in history. Art can, at this point, no longer have the same significance for humans as it did in the classical age. Some of Hegel's pronouncements about the end of art refer, then, to this profound shift in human history, but they are not to be confused with the conceptual endings just described.

But Hegel suggests yet another sense of art's ending. Art ends in countless smaller ways when it fails, as Hegel puts it, to be *poetic* and lapses into *prose*. These terms, I will argue, are crucial to parsing how Hegel's idealism, as defined by the characteristics outlined earlier, informs and is informed by his philosophy of art. Hegel uses "prosaic" to describe everyday objects, facts, and situations insofar as they appear given. "Poetic," by contrast, has etymological roots in the verb "to make" (*Ä:I*, 216/164, 213/161). All art, in this sense, is poetic since an artwork's created status is explicit: it is "something made, produced by a man who has taken it into his imagination, pondered it, and issued it by his own activity out of his imagination" (*Ä:I*, 214/162). As I will argue, this mutually formative process makes explicit the relationship between humans and their world. In particular, I will argue that it is part of Hegel's argument against philosophical realism and in favor of art's essential *Schein*: its seeming or semblance.[23]

Art's *prosaic endings* occur, then, when artists fail to be poetic. This happens in a range of ways: when they resort to simple imitation, indulge in excess subjectivity, promote division rather than unity, or try to instruct, moralize, or entertain. Parsing this kind of ending allows us to fill in another category often neglected in Hegel scholarship, namely how Hegel accounts for bad, failed, or non-art.[24] Ultimately, I will argue, each judgment regarding an artwork's success—whether it qualifies as true art or as one of these inferior designations—can be traced back to Hegel's idealist commitments as described above. Art's prosaic endings also help us understand Hegel's claim, shared by many of his contemporaries, that the challenge of remaining poetic in the face of prose is greater in the modern world than it was in the classical world. The modern world, as we will see, struggles to find *poetic* articulations for a content that is, for good philosophical reasons, prosaic. Art consequently pits two of Hegel's fundamental insights against each other: the first is that the modern world has developed a more adequate understanding of human freedom. The second is that this understanding is very difficult to portray in art.

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[23] Hegel was not alone in applying "poetic" to a wide range of artistic genres. Rutter, for instance, reports that "Grimm's *Wörterbuch* lists the phrase 'There are thus poetic and prosaic painters', from Lessing's *Laokoon*, as the first recorded instance" (2010, 140). See also Beiser (2003), 10.

[24] For another account of these distinctions, see Rutter (2010), 20.

Disentangling these senses of art's endings also, I will argue, clarifies a series of interpretive questions about the *Aesthetics*. These include the status of comedy, the sense in which drama is art's culmination, and why Hegel's discussion of architecture essentially ends with thirteenth-century cathedrals. It can also help us understand difficult concepts in Hegel's philosophy such as what he means by the unity of unity and division. The *Aesthetics* has remained under-utilized in these debates and in understanding Hegel's philosophy generally. My hope is to reverse this trend in the interest of understanding both Hegel's philosophy of art and his idealism better.

3. The Predominance of Part II and the Necessity of Part III

A second misconception about Hegel's philosophy of art that this book aims to address is an overemphasis, almost to the point of exclusivity, on the major claim of Part II of Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Part II is where, to repeat, Hegel outlines how what he calls particular art forms, sometimes called worldviews, develop from symbolic art to classical art to romantic art. In each case, Hegel describes how civilizations express themselves artistically. Persian pantheism generates multi-limbed deities and sublime poetry; classical Greece produces serene sculpture and scatological comedies; the evolving worldview of the romantic era prompts the development of everything from chivalric poetry to the bourgeois novel. In each case, Hegel assesses the adequacy of these worldviews, measuring the extent to which they reflect an understanding of human freedom in his idealist sense.

This part of Hegel's argument dominates discussions of his philosophy of art, even discussions of the individual arts. Art, according to Hegel, as Pinkard puts it, is primarily a means reflecting on how "collective understandings of normativity dissolve and fail."[25] Beauty on Houlgate's reading of Hegel is "stone, wood, colored pigment, or sound worked in such a way that we can see our own life, freedom, and spirit expressed in it."[26] Beiser writes that Hegel defines beauty as "the expression of a culture's identity."[27] Pippin suggests that we follow Hegel "in seeing artworks as elements in such a collective attempt at self-knowledge across time, and to see such self-knowledge as essential elements in the struggle for the realization of freedom."[28] Danto's influential application of Hegel's theory to contemporary art can also be classified under this description. Art, Danto suggests, is "embodied meaning": his own practice in reviewing art, he reports, has been "to look for the meaning of the art and then to determine how the meaning is embodied in the object"—a process he attributes to Hegel.[29]

These interpretations portray Hegel's theory as primarily a kind of expressionism in which artists articulate a culture's self-understanding in general and its understanding of freedom in particular. To repeat, such readings of Hegel are justified by his discussion of the particular art forms in Part II. They are also reinforced by what Hegel sometimes describes in Part III as an individual art's appropriate content. But Part III, in which Hegel discusses the individual arts—architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry—also makes clear that Hegel's conception of art and its role in our understanding of truth goes further.[30] There Hegel assesses arts on their own terms, asking what is sculptural about sculpture or poetic about poetry. He documents how music's components—rhythm, harmony, and melody—most successfully combine, and how architecture's extension affects our understanding of space. In these sections, we learn less about Hegel's practical philosophy and more about his theory of how we, through our senses, understand ourselves also as embodied creatures.

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[25] Pinkard (2007), 5.

[26] Houlgate (2000), 63.

[27] Beiser (2009), 186.

[28] Pippin (2014), 25.

[29] Danto (2005), 18.

[30] Hegel did not explicitly divide his lectures into these three parts until 1828, although the general division is recognizable in each lecture series. The characterizations of Part II as concerning "besondere Formen des Kunstschönen" (which Knox translates "particular forms of art") and Part III as regarding "einzelne Künste" (translated as "individual arts") are his editor Hotho's addition. Since they clearly correlate to a distinction Hegel makes between these two parts, however, I have retained them. I discuss Hotho's editing in what follows.

Hegel's analysis of individual arts can, I will argue, allow us to look beyond the social-political aspects of freedom to the way freedom has its foundation in Hegel's description of our experience of space, our perception, our emotions, and our imaginations. A full picture of freedom on Hegel's view requires recognizing that we must resist the given at *all* levels, including these more individual levels. Part III of Hegel's lectures suggests art's relevance in enabling this resistance. Put another way: freedom for Hegel is not confined to the social and political spheres. It requires a consciousness of our mutually determinative capacities at the level of perception and feeling as well. If the only freedom we are conscious of is our freedom to shape social-political norms, we are only part of the way there. Art can help us get closer.

4. Hegel's Aesthetics in Historical Context

Another aim of this book is to situate Hegel better within the broader conversations about art taking place during his lifetime. Hegel's theory is often contrasted to Kant's, and his disagreements with early romantic authors are well documented. Other connections have been neglected, leaving us with an impoverished view of Hegel's influences and an inflated view of his originality. This rich environment will be an ongoing topic, but I want here to give a brief overview of the intellectual trends prevalent during Hegel's life.

Hegel's wife, Marie, once reported that wherever there was anything beautiful to be seen or heard, her husband had to be there.[31] Hegel's lifelong interest in the arts was doubtless inspired by an intellectual climate in which art had achieved unprecedented status. This status, to be sure, had its roots in centuries of theorizing about the arts. Since the Renaissance, for instance, philosophers and artists had debated the hierarchy of the arts (painting versus sculpture, sculpture versus poetry), a debate frequently informed by an equally passionate debate about the hierarchy of the senses.[32] The seventeenth-century *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* had engaged the most significant minds of several generations on the question of whether, and in what way, ancient art should be held up as the pinnacle of artistic accomplishment. Eighteenth-century theorists from Baumgarten to Lessing established art's centrality as part of humans' search for truth; empiricists argued for aesthetic pleasure as evidence for the primacy of the senses.[33]

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[31] Dilly (1986), 396.

But the generation directly preceding Hegel brought new urgency to the question of art's relevance. Kant's claim that aesthetic experience—the "free play" of the faculties—was an expression of freedom and that beauty was a symbol of morality inspired a generation of feverish philosophizing about art.[34] In a series of influential essays, Schiller elevated art to the pinnacle of human excellence and suggested it as an antidote to the modern malaise responsible for the French Revolution's genocidal fury.[35] German literature's place on the world stage had recently been revolutionized by Goethe and Schiller—two consummate artists whose theorizing about art and art criticism were almost as influential as their art itself. These two titans of the new German stage battled publicly with other playwrights such as August von Kotzebue and Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, champions of a trend toward natural speech and everyday protagonists as opposed to the stylized French theater that had dominated for centuries. Art quickly became one of the fronts on which the battle for German national identity was fought. Johann Joachim Winckelmann's epoch-defining writings on the classical world, for instance, were influential in part because of the suggestion that Germans had a unique connection to the ancient Greek world, thus allowing reform-minded Germans to bypass the alliance between Rome, Catholicism, and France with a trajectory linking Greece, Protestantism, and Germany.

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[32] I will have more to say about these debates in Part III. For a general sense of their contours, see for instance Lichtenstein (2008).

[33] See Beiser (2009), 5.

[34] Kant (1990), §9, §58.

[35] Schiller (1993).

Hegel's generation was, if anything, more ambitious regarding art's potential. In the "Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism," a fragment penned if not authored by Hegel during his university days with Schelling and Hölderlin in the Tübingen *Stift*, we read that "the highest act of reason is an aesthetic act" and that the philosopher "must possess as much aesthetic power as the poet."[36] Soon afterward, Friedrich Schlegel and the poet Novalis launched German Romanticism with the assertion that art provided humans' only access to truth. Schelling's 1802–3 lectures on the philosophy of art, like Hegel's, granted art a prominent position, even if its importance had diminished significantly since both authors' youthful enthusiasms. August Wilhelm Schlegel's translations of Shakespeare, together with his influential lectures on art, given in 1809–11 and published soon thereafter, gave German-speaking audiences new access to literatures of other nationalities and an idea of Germany's place in literature's history.[37] Several of Hegel's contemporaries—inspired by Winckelmann to take the history of art seriously in its theory (a topic almost entirely ignored by Kant and treated only speculatively by Schiller[38])—devoted themselves to new research on "the Orient," founding entire disciplines devoted to languages and arts of civilizations more ancient than the Greeks'.[39]

Despite this enthusiasm, Hegel was not alone in his concern that art's position in the modern world was weakened. Both Johann Gottfried Herder and A. W. Schlegel expressed concern that the modern world was unpoetical, alienated, and fractured and thus unable to produce great art. Schlegel also described interpretation and so art criticism as overtaking art's authority: a theme we will see resurface in Hegel's writings. His brother Friedrich worried that a sickly culture could only produce sickly art.[40] It was, in short, a time of high hopes and high anxiety regarding art's future, with members of Hegel's generation arrayed across a spectrum of diagnoses of its failings and prescriptions for its success.

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[36] Anonymous (1996), 4.

[37] Ewton (1972), 13, 10.

[38] On art's place in Schiller's speculative history, see Moland (2018).

[39] I discuss these intellectual trends in Chapter 2.

[40] See Gjesdal's discussion of A. W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* at Gjesdal (2018), 267–268; for Friedrich Schlegel's comments, see his "Letter on the Novel" at Schlegel (2003), 289.

It was also a time of intense collaboration and cross-pollination. Schelling wrote to A. W. Schlegel in 1802 requesting that Schlegel loan him a manuscript copy of his lectures on art. "Your manuscript," the letter reads, "would be of excellent service to me . . . and spare me many investigations." By Emil Fackenheim's telling, Schelling went on to borrow, frequently without attribution, from these lectures, but also from Friedrich Schlegel, Goethe, Schiller, and Winckelmann.[41] In his study of A. W. Schlegel's literary theory, Ralph Ewton suggests that Schlegel did the same with Herder, Kant, Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, and his own brother Friedrich.[42] As we will see, Hegel was no exception to this culture of appropriation.

Hegel's continued theorizing about art is already evident in his first major publication, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1806). The *Phenomenology* incorporates significant references to art, including classical plays like Sophocles's *Antigone* and modern literature such as Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, at systematically pivotal points in his argument. Art's importance in Hegel's mature philosophy is clear from its status in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* as a form of Absolute Spirit—Hegel's term, as we will see, for the three ways humans reflect on truth. And in 1818, in Heidelberg, Hegel began to lecture on the philosophy of art. After moving to Berlin, he gave this course of lectures, in modified form, four times—in 1820/21, 1823, 1826, and 1828/29—making the philosophy of art his most frequent lecture topic. His sudden death in 1831 prevented him from realizing his intention to issue his thoughts in a definitive publication.[43] But interest in his philosophy of art continued, guaranteeing its survival long past Hegel's lifetime, albeit in a form he could not have imagined.

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[41] Fackenheim (1954), 310.

[42] Ewton (1972), 19.

[43] Gethmann-Siefert (2005b), 17, 18.

5. A Note on the Sources

Hegel's last revision of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, published in 1830, discusses art as the first of Absolute Spirit's three moments (*EPG*, §556ff.). It contains eight sections on art but includes no discussion of particular artworks or even aesthetic genres. But in his lectures, Hegel was more expansive. After his death, Hegel's student Heinrich Gustav Hotho compiled materials available to him, including student notes on Hegel's lectures and Hegel's notes themselves, into a fully explicated text.[44] This text, which Hotho published under the title *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* in 1835, became known as the definitive statement of Hegel's philosophy of art. Its 1975 translation into English by T. M. Knox, entitled *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, reinforced this position. Hotho's compilation, in contrast to Hegel's published statements about art, teems with examples and suspiciously elegant sentences. Readers of the *Aesthetics* familiar with Hegel's other works could be forgiven for being surprised that such lucid prose is Hegel's. Unfortunately, that is often because it is not.

In the last decades, German scholar Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert has led a group of researchers in a systematic study of the student lecture notes on which Hotho's edition is based. Even a cursory reading of these notes reveals significant editorial license on Hotho's part, including altered examples and rearranged argumentation. Some scholars, in the wake of this research, restrict themselves to the individual lecture series despite the fact that, as Gethmann-Siefert herself acknowledges, no coherent picture of Hegel's thoughts on aesthetics can be forthcoming from such an approach. Interpreting Hegel's philosophy of art requires, then, a judicious weighing of all available sources and difficult decisions regarding how best to synthesize them. My approach has been to tack back and forth, verifying Hotho's text with reference to student lecture notes where possible, acknowledging when his changes obscure points made in the lectures, and giving reasons for including Hotho's arguments when, despite a lack of textual evidence, they seem to me to be confirmed by Hegel's broader philosophy. This hybrid approach, I suggest, has the best chance of conveying a true sense of the importance of art in Hegel's system and an accurate representation of his extensive thoughts on the topic. Hegel's own interest in art and the unprecedented status given to art in the philosophy of his generation argue, it seems to me, for a fuller rather than a reduced account of his aesthetic philosophy. Interpreting Hegel's aesthetics will always, we might say, be more art than science. It can never offer a definitive representation of Hegel's theory of art. It can only hope to do justice to the complex and vast range of his thoughts on a subject that clearly mattered greatly to him.

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[44] Ibid., 17–18. See also Gethmann-Siefert (1991) as well as the introductions to individual lecture cycles.

But Hegel did not, to state the obvious, think art mattered because it mattered to him. His belief in art's fundamental importance to humans is explicit. "The universal need for art," Hegel suggests, "is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self" (*Ä:I*, 51/31). Art should "strip the external world of its inflexible foreignness," showing that the world is not alien to us, waiting to be discovered, but that our reflections and activities help form that world. It should, again to oversimplify, make the strange familiar and the familiar strange but in ways that, as we will see play out across his lectures, allow us to sense truth. After art's historical end, it cannot have the same significance for us as the mythological creation of the gods had for the ancient Greeks. But as one of the ways humans reflect on truth, art's importance will continue. The work of art, Hegel says,

> must disclose to us the higher interests of our spirit and will, what is in itself human and powerful, the true depths of the heart. The chief thing essentially at issue is that these things shall gleam through all external appearances and that their keynote shall resound through all other things in our restless life. (*Ä:I*, 360–361/279)

Understanding Hegel's idealism enables us to understand why he believes that art can reveal these higher interests and deeper meanings. Ultimately, Hegel's theory suggests that the joy of aesthetic experience is the joy of recognized truth: a truth that can pierce the hard shell of our everyday, prosaic lives and reveal the poetry at the core of existence.

PART I

ART AND THE IDEA

1

Truth and Beauty

Art as the Sensuous Appearance of the Idea

1. Foundations of Idealism: From Logic to Spirit

If Hegel's aesthetics is indeed an "aesthetics of truth," what is that truth? I have already indicated several characteristics of Hegel's idealism; to begin to support my claim about art's role in helping us understand that idealism, I want first to consider the deeper philosophical commitments that lead to his definition of art as the "sensible appearance of the Idea" and to explain art's place in Hegel's greater system.

Hegel, to repeat, asserts that the true is the whole: everything that exists is part of a self-producing totality. Hegel thus stakes his claim to a radical holism in contrast to Kant's dualism. But a whole is not a whole if it does not include division. And indeed, when, in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel identifies the most general description of the whole, namely being, his claim is that it is indistinguishable from nothing; the two cancel each other out and together generate becoming (*EL*, §86–88). In another of Hegel's common formulations, the negation of nothing is itself negated, bringing us not back to being, but to the identity of being and nothing, namely becoming. Concepts familiar from traditional logic—for instance, quality, quantity, and measure—emerge dialectically from this initial development, introducing division into the original undifferentiated whole.

A few important claims emerge from these first dialectical movements. First, the fact that being implies nothing and the two generate becoming shows, Hegel thinks, that the system is presuppositionless: it begins not with an arbitrarily chosen starting point but with the indisputable fact that being exists. Second, it sets the stage for Hegel's assertion that the system is self-determining. Being, by its very nature, implies nothing; the two produce becoming without input from an outside force. While the self-generation of becoming does not yet count as freedom in any full-blooded way, its emergence is the basis for Hegel's later, more complete definitions of freedom. Third, this original dialectical movement lays the groundwork for claiming that self-determination is also a mutual determination. Being and nothing determine each other; being cannot be conceptualized as being unless distinguished from nothing. In the end, because of Hegel's holism, they are both part of the true that is the whole, and so even this mutual determination counts as self-determination. Finally, this original dialectic establishes the foundation for Hegel's opposition to the idea of the merely given: to anything conceived as separate from the mutually determining system. Something outside of that system would render it not self-determining and therefore not free. Humans likewise, Hegel will argue, are free only when they realize there is no given but that they, too, are part of this self-determining, dialectically developing whole. Postulating a given, it follows, is a kind of unfreedom.

Many dialectical developments later, the *Logic* ends with Hegel's description of the Concept, at which point thought turns from attempting to understand the object by, for instance, discussing essence and appearance, to attempting to understand itself. The Concept understood as thought taking thinking itself as its object dialectically implies an object as its opposite. But like being and nothing, thought and object cannot be fully other to each other, suggesting their essential unity. The dialectical unity of concept and object is what Hegel calls the Idea. The Idea as this overarching unity is key to understanding Hegel's idealism as distinct from any Platonic conception of transcendent "ideas" as providing the standard for truth, from a Berkelean subjective idealism that challenges our belief in an external world, and from the Kantian suggestion of a noumenal realm beyond human experience. The Idea in Hegel's scheme is the interpenetrating, mutually determining unity of thought and object: it is "the *Subject-Object* as the *unity of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, of the soul and the body*, as the *possibility that has actuality in itself*, as that whose *nature* can be *comprehended only as existing*"—and, Hegel helpfully adds, "so forth" (*EL*, §214, italics in the original). It is an early example of the unity of unity and division or identity of identity and difference: a theme that will prove to be a criterion for good art.

The *Logic*'s analysis of thought thinking itself is then opposed to the *Philosophy of Nature*'s derivation of causal phenomena and the many-layered world of the organic. Logic and nature in turn reach a synthesis in Spirit. As opposed to logic, Spirit is the realm of embodied beings. As opposed to nature, it is the realm of freedom. It is, then, the realm of humans understood as a hybrid of thought and nature or, in Hegel's memorable designation, as amphibious.[1] Spirit comprises the normative realm in which humans develop their subjectivity, their spontaneity, and their self-determination, as well as their moral sense and social institutions. This normative realm is chronicled first in what Hegel calls Subjective Spirit, where he discusses how habit, desire, thought, and will—to take a few of its topics—function in the individual, and then in what he calls Objective Spirit, most famously articulated in the *Philosophy of Right*. It is here that we get his account of how humans' self-determination depends on mutual recognition, and his claim that such recognition must be integrated into social and political institutions that humans collectively create. Objective Spirit in the *Philosophy of Right* concludes with Hegel's discussion of the philosophy of history in which, as already outlined, he asserts that modern history consists of the working out of the idea that all humans are free.

At the conclusion of Objective Spirit, then, Hegel has asserted that all humans are equal and must be treated with dignity and respect, and that history is the history of humans' progress toward this understanding.[2] He now must come full circle and articulate how humans come to reflect on and understand these truths. This understanding is crucial to the unity of unity and division at the heart of Hegel's philosophy. Without it, humans will remain unaware of their creative participation in the world and continue to see the world as given. They will then be unfree. Hegel groups the practices through which humans reflect on their world and come to understand their role in it—in Hegel's technical language, practices through which they reflect on the Idea—under the heading "Absolute Spirit."

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[1] *Ä:I*, 80–81/54. Compare Hm28, 11. Pinkard makes this designation a central part of his analysis of Hegel's philosophy generally in Pinkard (2012), for instance 177–186, and Pinkard (2017), 12.

[2] Like most such lofty-sounding declarations of the time, Hegel's concept "all humans" excluded both women and "pre-historical" people such as Africans and Native Americans. See *VPG*, 108/181 and 128/198.

Absolute Spirit takes three forms: art, religion, and philosophy. Hegel is unambiguous about art's contribution to the human project of reflection. "[O]wing to its preoccupation with truth as the absolute object of consciousness," he says, "art too belongs to the absolute sphere of the spirit, and therefore, in its content, art stands on one and the same ground with religion . . . and philosophy" (*Ä:I*, 139/101).[3] Unlike religion and philosophy, however, art presents its content through the senses. Precisely for this reason, art is less overtly an articulation of the truth than is religion or philosophy. Religion is more explicit about its claims to truth: it expresses them through narratives such as those found in holy texts. Philosophy sheds both sensual form and narrative: it aspires to articulate the "highest truth, truth as such." When it is successful, it reaches the "resolution of the highest opposition and contradiction" (*Ä:I*, 137/100) in which "the validity and power *as* opposition and contradiction is gone" (*Ä:I*, 138/100). This explicit articulation of the identity of identity and difference is exactly what Hegel takes himself to have achieved in his philosophical system, at which point "the eternal Idea, in full fruition of its essence, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute Spirit" (*EPG*, §577).

With this extremely brief background in Hegel's system and art's place within it behind us, we can turn to Part I of his lectures on the philosophy of art. Part I is a jarring mix of high metaphysics and what amounts to practical advice for artists. Hegel begins by describing art in the systematic terms outlined earlier and defending his definition from its competitors. But he then turns to surveying the many decisions artists must make—from choosing a setting and a color scheme to selecting characters and conflicts—and assessing how each can best convey the Idea in sensuous form. In doing so, Hegel sometimes appears to be reverting to an older model of aesthetic theory, found for instance in the work of Wolff, Baumgarten, or Gottsched, that consisted primarily of providing rules for artists.[4] His description of the artistic process will show that this is not entirely the case, and indeed he criticizes both Aristotle and Longinus for being "art doctors" whose advice on how to cure art was "even less reliable than those of ordinary doctors for restoring human health" (*Ä:I*, 31/15). Nevertheless, these sections offer an analysis of how artists can best bring the Idea as Hegel understands it to our contemplation. By the end, a basic outline of what artists must do to produce true art on Hegel's view emerges, as does a sense of one of the primary ways art ends.

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[3] Compare Schelling's articulation of a similar point discussed at Bowie (2009), 150.

2. From Idea to Ideal to Beauty

Early in his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel reiterates his claim, originally found in the *Logic*, that the Idea is "the concrete unity of Concept and objectivity" (*Ä:I*, 152/108). "This totality," he then repeats, "is the *Idea*, i.e. it is not only the ideal unity and subjectivity of the Concept, but likewise its objectivity—the objectivity which does not stand over against the Concept as something merely opposed to it but, on the contrary, the objectivity in which the concept relates itself to itself" (*Ä:I*, 150/110).

The Idea, to repeat, is fully *conceptualized*—comprehended, consciously recognized by thought—in philosophy. But the Idea can also be grasped "in a determinate form" by appearing to sense. In that case, it is still truth but acquires another name: beauty. The beautiful, Hegel says, is then simply the "appearance of the Idea to sense" ["*Das* Schöne *bestimmt sich dadurch als das sinnliche* Scheinen *der Idee*" (*Ä:I*, 151/111)].[5] To distinguish this determinate appearance of the Idea from the Idea in its religious or philosophical forms, Hegel chooses another word: the Idea in determinate form he calls the Ideal (*Ä:I*, 145/106).[6] Throughout his aesthetic theory, the Ideal will stand in for Hegel's claim that art is the way in which the Idea—itself shorthand for the vast, self-determining whole that expresses the unity of thought and being and underlies the wide-ranging components of Hegel's idealism—is experienced sensually.

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[4] See, for instance, Beiser (2009), 12–14, 93–96, 121–127. The nature and purpose of rules in these three cases, of course, vary widely.

[5] Gethmann-Siefert has long objected to this phrase on the grounds that it never appears in Hegel's lecture notes and so is one of Hotho's impositions. See her introduction to H23 at xxxviii. Her objection has in part to do with the association of this phrase with Platonism: see Gethmann-Siefert (2005b), 30. I agree that this association is not Hegel's intent, and I argue in what follows for an understanding of *Schein* that is

In giving beauty this admittedly opaque definition, what philosophical traditions is Hegel building on, and which is he rejecting? Perhaps most noticeably, Hegel disregards Kant's claim that beauty, because of the free play of the faculties it elicits, is a symbol of morality. He does not, in fact, make any systematic use of the idea of "play" that was central not only to Kant but also to Schiller.[7] He seems uninterested in empiricist definitions of aesthetic pleasure as deriving from the senses; in fact, he seems uninterested in pleasure altogether. In stipulating "Idea" as shorthand for the truth of his system and defining art as the sensible appearance of this Idea, Hegel instead, as suggested in the Introduction, seems to signal a return to an "aesthetics of truth" familiar from the rationalist tradition that preceded Kant. These rationalists—among whom Beiser, for instance, counts Wolff, Baumgarten, Leibniz, and Mendelssohn—shared the conviction that beauty was the "perception of perfection." Perfection in turn consisted in harmony, and harmony in turn was defined as optimal unity-in-variety.[8]

Insofar as the Idea is Hegel's shorthand for the true that is the whole, and insofar as beauty allows us to experience that truth sensibly, Hegel follows the rationalists in suggesting that beauty gives us access to truth. But instead of the truth understood as a pre-existing divine or rational order, beauty on Hegel's definition must bring to

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closer to Schiller's. Since Hegel clearly considers the various connotations of *Schein* to be crucial to art's value, and there is no question that the beautiful is an expression of the Idea and that it is directed to the senses, I think this formulation remains appropriate.

[6] See A20, 24–30; H23, 41–45; K26, 53–64; and Hm28, 19–22.

[7] Hegel gives a cursory account of Kant's and Schiller's aesthetic theories at *Ä:I*, 83–93/56–64.

[8] Beiser (2009), 2–3, 36. Beiser's work in general is indispensable for understanding the aesthetics of this period.

our minds the components of Hegel's idealism. As he introduces beauty, Hegel in fact reiterates key conclusions from his description of the joint formation of self and world, found earlier in his system, in both the theoretical and practical spheres. In the theoretical sphere, he reminds us, we risk presupposing things to be independent. Here Hegel references the misguided epistemologies documented, for instance, in his account of sense-certainty.[9] If we accept such theories, we "direct our attention to things, we let them alone, we make our ideas, etc., a prisoner to belief in things, since we are convinced that objects are rightly understood only when our relation to them is passive . . . . With this one-sided freedom of objects there is immediately posited the unfreedom of subjective comprehension." In the practical sphere, the same unfreedom results when the subject thinks that "he can only carry out his decision by annihilating objects, or at least altering them, moulding them, forming them, cancelling their qualities." Here Hegel echoes conclusions familiar from the lord-bondsman dialectic (found in both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Encyclopedia*) and the emergence of the will: when the subject perceives the object only as something there for its use, "it is things which are deprived of their independence." In such cases, "the objects have become unfree, the subjects free" (*Ä:I*, 154/113).[10]

The true, Hegel has claimed, is neither of these extremes: the true is the mutually determining unity of thought and object and the knowledge of that unity. Since beauty is to be sensuously experienced truth, it must be an experience of this unity. In fact, Hegel says that "the consideration and the existence of objects *as beautiful*" is the "unification of both [theoretical and practical] points of view, since it cancels the one-sidedness of both in respect of the subject and its object alike and therefore their finitude and unfreedom" (*Ä:I*, 154/113).

It is by being this expression of the Idea that art is elevated to the same level as religion and philosophy. It is "simply one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the *Divine*, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit" (*Ä:I*, 20/27).[11]

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[9] For the *Encyclopedia*'s discussion of these limited epistemologies, see *EPG*, §§413ff.

[10] For the lord-bondsman dialectic, see *PhG*, ¶¶178–198 and *EPG* §§431–444.

[11] A version of this claim appears at H23, 4; K26, 3; and Hm28, 13.

Art also begins to heal the breach spirit imposes on itself when, in order to include division, the whole goes out of itself, as Hegel says, into division: art is "the first reconciling middle term between pure thought and what is merely external," between "finite reality and the infinite freedom of conceptual thinking" (*Ä:I*, 21/29). As will become clear in Hegel's description of the particular arts, this reconciliation with the divine is one of humans' most difficult tasks.

Describing beauty as the "*sinnliche* Scheinen *der Idee*" also enables Hegel to imply multiple connotations of the word *Schein*.[12] Translated one way, art allows the Idea to shine forth, to emanate, as it were, out of the realm of thought into the realm of the senses. But when translated as "appearance," *Schein* also implies art's *seeming*, or its *semblance*, as opposed to being.[13] Hegel interprets Plato as arguing that since art only imitates reality—the painted bed is not really a bed, the dramatized battle not really a battle—it is at best an inferior copy of reality and at worst simply fraudulent. But Hegel's claim will be that precisely by qualifying as seeming as opposed to being, art in fact presents a "higher reality and truer existence": it "liberates the true content of phenomena from the pure appearance and deception of this bad, transitory world, and gives them a higher actuality, born of the spirit" (*Ä:I*, 23/29). Art "points through and beyond itself, and itself hints at something spiritual of which it is to give us an idea, whereas immediate appearance *does not present itself as deceptive* but rather as the real and the true" (*Ä:I*, 23/29, italics mine). Hegel thus distances himself from aesthetic theories such as Aristotle's that locate art's essence in imitation and allies himself with theories like Schiller's that identify art's characteristic semblance as crucial to its value.[14]

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[12] See also A20, 26 and H23, 1–2.

[13] As Rutter points out, *Schein* also has its foundation in the *Logic*. It appears first as the opposite of *Wesen* or essence or "as a deception counterposed to truth." But this opposition, like all others, is unstable, and essence must ultimately appear (*erscheinen*). The resulting unity of inner and outer is actuality (*Wirklichkeit*). See *EL*, §142 and Rutter (2010), 65. See also important distinctions regarding meanings of *Schein* in the *Logic* at Hindrichs (2018), 30–33 and a comprehensive attempt to link the *Logic* to beauty at Wicks (1994), 71ff.

[14] Compare Schiller's argument that the "indifference to reality and interest in semblance [*Schein*]" on display when the early human adorns weapons, turns movement into dance, and so on shows him to be "no longer taking pleasure in what [he] receives,

The claim that reality is deceptive and yet hides its deception is another lesson evident throughout Hegel's discussion of misguided epistemologies such as those represented by sense-certainty. In our everyday lives, we experience both our selves and the world as independently, individually existing: in short, as given. This experience, Hegel repeatedly suggests, is not only untrue but hampers our freedom. Part of beauty's power, as we will see, is that it can disrupt this misconception. When we experience beauty, the "self in relation to the object likewise ceases to be the abstraction of noticing, sensuously perceiving, and observing" (*Ä:I*, 155/114). In contemplating the beautiful object, the self "makes explicit the unity of Concept and reality, the unification, in their concreteness"; it senses the unity beneath what was "hitherto separated . . . in the self and its object" (*Ä:I*, 155/114). It allows us, in short, to sense the mutual formation at the heart of reality.

The beautiful object models idealist reality in other ways as well. It must appear free and self-determining: an integrated whole whose parts are both necessary and harmonized. The necessity should, however, not be too obvious but rather "hidden behind an appearance of undesigned contingency" (*Ä:I*, 157/115). The harmony, in turn, must "preserve an appearance of independent freedom" among its parts. The beautiful object's form must also not appear "stamped" on the content mechanically; the artwork must make it seem that the form instead is "giving itself an outward shape" (*Ä:I*, 156/115). Here we again see echoes of the rationalists' emphasis on harmony and the appearance of perfection. But Hegel claims to have derived these desiderata not from a pre-existing order that humans discover but from within his system. Beauty entails harmony and necessity because the components of the Idea itself are harmonious and necessary. The need for and nature of art have already been demonstrated by his overall philosophy, a philosophy that itself, he claims, is presuppositionless. Deriving a definition from within the system establishes a pattern we will see Hegel

but in what [he] does" (Schiller 1943ff., XX, 399). English translation at Schiller (1993), 166–167.

use throughout his definition of both particular art forms and the individual arts.

Despite its centrality to his system, however, Hegel's relationship to beauty is both complicated and unclear. This is because, as we will have ample opportunity to witness in both his discussion of classical art and of sculpture as an individual art, he sometimes seems to reserve the designation "beautiful" for art of the classical world. As a consequence, he is sometimes accused of a "neo-classicism" that recognizes beauty only in ancient Greek art. I will argue in Chapter 3 that a better understanding of art's various endings shows this accusation to be misguided. And indeed, much of Hegel's contemporary relevance in the writing of Danto, Pippin, and others relies specifically on his theory's ability to account for art's importance after it is no longer beautiful in the classical sense but has adopted other criteria for success.

Generally, however, the question of what Hegel means by beauty admits of a simpler answer. Hegel begins all four of his lecture cycles with a version of the following claim: "These lectures are devoted to Aesthetics. Their topic is the spacious *realm of the beautiful*; more precisely, their province is *art*, or, rather, *fine art*" [*schöne Kunst*] (*Ä:I*, 13/11, italics in the original). Each claim included in this sentence—that aesthetics is the realm of the beautiful, that the beautiful is the province of the fine arts, that fine art and art are the same topic, and that aesthetics is the realm of fine arts—is controversial. Hegel acknowledges as much by admitting that the word *aesthetics* has its roots in "sensation, of feeling," and so designates a wider sphere than beauty.[15] But he remains undeterred. As long as we are talking about art, in other words, we will be talking about the beautiful. It seems to me, then, that Rush is right to claim that "fine art just *is* beautiful art [*schöne Kunst*]; in point of fact, calling something "fine art" for Hegel is identical with calling such art beautiful" and that we "may substitute 'beautiful art' *salva veritate* for any occurrence of 'Art.'"[16]

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[15] For other terminological considerations, see, for instance, Hm28, 1.

[16] Rush (2018), 161. For more on the controversial nature of these positions, see Pippin (2014), 8.

Art's systematic position and its definition as the "pure appearance of the Idea to sense" also allow Hegel to rule out several components of aesthetics included by other theorists. The first is natural beauty. Excluding nature from the realm of beauty, Hegel acknowledges, may appear arbitrary or even perverse. This is especially true since Kant's revolutionary theory of aesthetics takes natural beauty as primary, leaving only a secondary place for fine arts. Schelling, whose popular philosophy of art was Hegel's main systematic competitor, based his system on a deep organicism evident in everything from his description of architecture to his assessment of the human figure in sculpture.[17] So audacious was Hegel's marginalization of natural beauty, in fact, that Hotho added an extended section on the topic, apparently to save his teacher from the embarrassment of having neglected it. But at least in his later lectures, Hegel is unambivalent.[18] Art is a way humans reflect on their place within the self-determining whole. This is a spiritual need: it has to do with humans' normative essence and their need to contemplate their own status in the world. Beauty, then, exists within the purview of the human, and Hegel pronounces that "even a useless notion that enters a man's head is higher than any product of nature" (*Ä:I*, 14/2).[19]

Art's systematic position as an expression of the Idea also allows Hegel to combat the claim that art is not "*deserving* of a scientific treatment" either because it is only entertainment or adornment or because it has only to do with feelings that by definition cannot be scientifically analyzed (*Ä:I*, 29 ff./13 ff.). He also discounts claims that art is a means of emotional edification or moral improvement. If art's primary purpose is to instruct, the artistic form "becomes a useless appendage" and art has no independent status (*Ä:I*, 77/51). In order to be a sensuous appearance of the Idea, art instead must express the identity of identity and difference by merging form and content, not forcing an already chosen content into an artistic form. Hegel in fact concludes that art cannot have any external utility: “art’s vocation is to unveil the *truth* in the form of sensuous artistic configuration, to set forth the reconciled opposition just mentioned, and so to have its end and aim in itself, in this very setting forth and unveiling” (*Ä:I*, 82/55).[20] Since art is itself an expression of the Idea, expressing the truth of the Idea is only self-expression, not an external means to an end. Other purposes—entertainment, adornment, edification—have nothing to do with art as such.

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[17] Schelling (1989), §113, §123.

[18] See A20, 37–40, where he discusses *das Naturschöne* but ultimately decides in favor of *das Kunstschöne*. Compare H23, 52ff. and the much shorter discussions at K26, 2–3 and Hm28, 1.

[19] Compare K26, 2.

Hegel’s summary dismissal of art’s educational potential is striking. It sets him apart from a long tradition of theorists convinced of art’s moralizing potential as well as from several of his immediate predecessors, such as Johann Christoph Gottsched, J. J. Bodmer, and J. J. Breitinger, who—despite their otherwise strident differences—explicitly saw the theater as a tool for moral improvement.[21] More surprisingly, he leaves little room for the claim that art, in giving us sensible access to the truth, educates the senses, the emotions, or the intellect. There will be traces of this idea in his description especially of music and lyric poetry, but he makes no broader claim to this effect here.[22] He also does not join Schiller in claiming that aesthetic experience will allow us to retain our humanity in the face of the modern world’s atomization and prepare us for better citizenship. Presumably the recognition of truth that art facilitates has some positive effects on those who experience it, but here Hegel is strangely silent on what those effects might be.

In two final stipulations of what art is not, Hegel sets the stage for a major theme regarding art’s ending. First, art cannot be pure subjective expression. Hegel’s extreme disapproval of this characterization of art frequently takes the form of personal animosity toward Friedrich Schlegel and his celebration of irony. Schlegel, himself both a theoretician and practitioner of art, placed irony at the pinnacle of philosophical truth. The Absolute, Schlegel claimed, could never be conceptualized; it could only be approximated and gestured at. This fact necessitates an ironic attitude that acknowledges both the Absolute and our inability to understand it. In this claim he was not alone: others of Hegel's generation, including K. W. F. Solger and Jean Paul Richter, also advocated this ironic stance.[23] But Hegel generally saves his ire for Schlegel. Not entirely fairly, he describes both Schlegel's artistic theory and practice as nothing but aestheticized egoism. From the ironic viewpoint, he complains, the ego "can remain lord and master of everything": anything can be art as long as it is related to the self. Consequently, "everything genuinely and independently real becomes only a show [*Schein*]" (*Ä:I*, 94/65):[24] from an ironic standpoint, there can also be no seriousness about the divine or about "law, morals, and truth." Such extreme subjectivity runs contrary to the claim that the true is not the individual subject but, instead, the whole. Aside from this philosophical concern, Hegel clearly sees irony as a relativism whose corrosive effects on ethical life must be resisted. "This irony was invented by Friedrich von Schlegel," he concludes dyspeptically, "and many others have babbled about it or are now babbling about it again" (*Ä:I*, 95/66).

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[20] Compare K26, 45.

[21] Beiser (2009), 80–83, 103ff.

[22] In H23, Hegel does discuss art’s potential for weakening the passions at 22–23.

Second, as Hegel also argued in the *Encyclopedia*, art cannot be mere imitation (*EPG*, §558).[25] On Plato's view, art will never be truthful, but the least objectionable art will imitate reality as closely as possible. The history of imitation as a criterion for art after Plato is long and complex, as is its relation to nature.[26] Hegel is primarily concerned with a more recent trend, namely naturalism. Playwrights such as August von Kotzebue, whose popularity far outstripped that of Goethe or Schiller during Hegel's lifetime, advocated a return to the "natural" in drama as a particularly German counterweight to overly stylized French art.[27] At the foundation of this trend is, as Hegel points out, the "old, ever-recurring dispute whether art should portray external objects just as they are or whether it should glorify natural phenomena and transfigure them" (*Ä:I*, 212/160). Hegel repeatedly shows himself to be no admirer of the French aesthetic. But he also has little patience for art that is nothing but a recitation of daily events. We have had, he complains, enough of the "naturalness" of art: "A father's moans about his wife and sons and daughters, about income and expenditure . . . the wife's trouble with maids in the kitchen, the sentimental love-affairs of daughters in the parlour—all this worry and bother everyone gets better and truer in his own home" (*Ä:I*, 213/161). Worse: naturalism in art repeats the mistake of presenting the world as simply given. Such art does little to make the strange familiar or the familiar strange or, as Hegel also puts it, to "reconvey" "external existence into the spiritual realm, so that the external appearance, by being adequate to the spirit, is the revelation thereof" (*Ä:I*, 206/156). Art must essentially and obviously be a seeming, not an imitation of the reality we claim to know. Part of art's spiritual potential, Hegel has argued, is exactly its ability to free us from the realism that naturalism professes to provide. Art's distance from reality—again, the fact that the bed is painted, not actual, and the battle is staged, not fought—is essential to its worth. Hegel claims that the "hard shell of nature and the ordinary world make it more difficult for the spirit to penetrate through them to the Idea than works of art do" (*Ä:I*, 23/29). It is difficult, to put it in terms of Hegel's philosophical idealism, to see myself and the world in a mutually formative relationship. But since a painted tree or a character in a drama is explicitly an act of creation, the mutually created nature of the world becomes available to sensuous experience through art.

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[23] Neither of these figures has received adequate philosophical attention. For exceptions, see Bubbio (2018) and Rush (2016), 198–209 on Solger and Coker (2018) on Jean Paul. Rush is also helpful on the question of Hegel's often unfair excoriations of Schlegel: see Rush (2016), 105ff. Hegel is less critical of Solger, praising him for not being himself ironic and for not being a lover of ironic art. Hegel's complaints regarding Jean Paul are a central topic of Chapter 5.

[24] Hegel was still willing in 1820 to acknowledge that the Schlegel brothers had gotten some things right (see A20, 8), but by 1826, his description of their influence qualifies as a rant. See K26, 34–37.

[25] Compare A20, 4; H23, 21; K26, 14; and Hm28, 1.

[26] As Lichtenstein writes of the French tradition that predated Hegel: "The definition of painting as the imitation of nature was widely accepted in the Académie, and the Academicians all identified nature with truth. But they did not all ascribe the same sense to the word *nature*. It functioned as an authoritative tribunal but it could mean empirical reality or the essence of things . . . nature real or ideal" (Lichtenstein 2008, 45).

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[27] See Williamson (2000). Kotzebue played another role in Hegel's life, however inadvertently, when his murder in 1819 by Karl Ludwig Sand prompted the Prussian government to issue the Karlsbad Decrees. These laws severely limited freedom of the press; Hegel's response to this censorship has long been a subject of controversy. See Pinkard (2000), 435ff. and Moland (2011a), 184n183.

Hegel also frames the dynamic between realism and idealism in art in terms of the difference, outlined in the Introduction, between the prosaic and the poetic. To repeat: Hegel uses "prosaic" to designate the everyday world as it appears given to us. All art, by contrast, is poetic in the sense of being "something made [*ein Gemachtes*], produced by a man who has taken it into his imagination [*in seine Vorstellung aufgenommen*], pondered it, and issued it by his own activity out of his imagination" (*Ä:I*, 214/162). But the artist does not create the object wholesale; she does not simply impose her subjectivity on her materials. Both approaches would be equally one-sided. Instead, the artistic process and the art object itself embody Hegel's claim that objects are not in fact independent, waiting to be apprehended, but that we and the world's objects are part of a mutually determining whole. It is this ability to show us explicitly what we do implicitly—creatively participate in the structuring of our world—that makes art part of Absolute Spirit and part of our freedom.

One way to conceptualize art, then, is that the artist transforms the prosaic—the mundane, the everyday—into the poetic. "[T]he truly poetical element [*das echt Poetische*] in art," he claims, "is just what we have called the Ideal" (*Ä:I*, 213/161). The artist unifies, purifies, and enhances the familiar world around us into an artificially simple whole that gives us a sensuous experience of the many-faceted true that is the whole and of our creative role within it. Even when art seems natural or depicts nature, "yet it is not the natural there as such *but that making . . . which is the poetic and the ideal*" (*Ä:I*, 216/164, italics mine). The failure to achieve the poetic in art is also the source of art's prosaic endings—cases, as we will see, in which art lapses into forms that no longer bring our awareness to the claims of idealism. Whenever it fails to achieve the poetic—which can happen when art is too subjective or mimetic—art risks ending.

Having dismissed inadequate characterizations of art and outlined his own definition in terms of his systematic commitments, Hegel lists three basic characteristics of art that allow the artist to transcend the prosaic and achieve the poetic. The first is that art must first be "brought about by human activity" (*Ä:I*, 44/25), neither natural nor a product of the divine.[28] The nature of artistic activity—to what extent it is the product of rules, inspiration, or genius—will be a topic of the following section. The third we have already considered: art must have as its end not education or entertainment but only itself. Hegel's second criterion requires further elucidation. Art, Hegel says, must be made "for apprehension by the senses" but in a way also related to the spirit (*Ä:I*, 44/25). In everyday life, the self responds to objects by desiring them, appropriating them, or negating them for its own use. As again in the case of the lord and bondsman, neither the consuming subject nor the consumed object is free. Art interrupts this negative relation: "With mere pictures of the wood that it might use, or of the animals it might want to eat, desire is not served" (*Ä:I*, 58/36). The subject can relate to the art object "without desire, as to an object which is for the contemplative side of spirit alone." Not unlike aesthetic pleasure in Kant's philosophy, the enjoyment of art is, in other words, disinterested.[29]

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[28] Compare H23, 6–7.

Although the art object should not be experienced as a consumable particular thing, neither should it be experienced only by the intelligence as a universal. Art instead "cherishes an interest in the object in its individual existence and does not struggle to change it into its universal thought and concept" (*Ä:I*, 60/38). In order to experience something as an artwork, we must not, "as science does," only understand "the concept of this object as a universal concept" (*Ä:I*, 60/38). The artwork's particular, sensuous nature must remain dominant.

In the end, then, "the sensuous must indeed be present in the work of art, but should appear only as the surface and as a pure appearance of the sensuous" (*Ä:I*, 60/38). I should, in other words, see the apple but know that it is only an *appearance* of the apple. Art's need to maintain itself as appearance explains why sight and hearing—as opposed to the more concrete sensations of touch, taste, or smell—are, according to Hegel, the senses most easily engaged by art (*Ä:I*, 61/39). Privileging sight and hearing is, as we will see in Part III, not uncontroversial; but in Hegel's view, these senses are best suited to capture art's essential *appearance*: its *Schein* or seeming.

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[29] See Hegel's brief discussion of disinterestedness in Kant at *Ä:I*, 86/58.

3. The Determinacy of Art

Art, then, will be the explicitly human-generated sensuous appearance of the Idea that has itself as its own end and so will allow us to experience the truth as Hegel's idealism defines it. But how can the artist bring the Idea to our senses? How must the Idea's general characteristics be determined such that we can sense them? Following his description of ways art can transform familiar objects such that we can experience them aesthetically, Hegel sets about answering these questions by assessing artworks based on how far they "contain ideality or are more or less capable of doing so" (*Ä:I*, 234/178). More specifically, of the infinite ways an artwork can take a particular form—color palate, sound, rhyme scheme, characters—which ones will make the Idea appear to our senses? What kind of situation, plot, and setting can evoke the true that is the whole or the unity of unity and division? And what kind of process must an artist engage in to produce true art? Hegel groups these questions under the heading "determinacy of the Ideal" [*Die Bestimmtheit des Ideals*], indicating ways that the concept of art becomes determinate in actual artworks.[30] Despite ruling out the study of particular artworks as a foundation for aesthetics, Hegel's range of answers to these questions is extensive (*Ä:I*, 29–38/14–21). I will only skim the surface here. By the end of this section, however, we should have a better sense both of what will count as art in Hegel's idealism and also particular ways in which that art can end.

On the most basic level, art transforms the everyday by converting a particular content from one form to another. A landscape painting is already nature made strange since it takes three dimensions and reduces them to two. In doing so, it disrupts the normalcy of our utilitarian interaction with nature. The same is true of sounds in music, action in dramas, or the image of a loved one in a portrait. Art also alters reality by unifying, focusing, purifying, and enhancing the familiar. In creating a portrait, for instance, the artist should not reproduce "the purely natural side of imperfect existence, little hairs, pores, little scars, warts" (*Ä:I*, 205/155). Instead, the artist must "grasp and reproduce the subject in his universal character and enduring personality" (*Ä:I*, 206/155). The same is true of drama: the playwright must not give us extraneous information about her characters' appearance or daily routines. The artist must choose the subject matter carefully: as we will see in more detail in subsequent chapters, topics that are too morbid or degrading will not allow the Idea to appear. But beyond these most basic transformations, how can art convey Hegel's idealism to the senses?

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[30] Compare Hm28, x.

Hegel takes up these questions as regards individual arts such as painting or music in Part III. But in the sections included in Part I, he focuses on how art can transform our understanding of action.[31] The word he uses in this context, *Handlung*, can mean both action and plot: part of his greater point, I will suggest, is that we can learn about action in our daily lives through experiencing dramatic plots. Hegel's overarching commitment is to analyze art in terms of its ability to reflect one of the Idea's many interrelated components. In this particular section, he highlights how art can depict human freedom by choosing conflicts that clarify our responsibility for the norms that structure our ethical lives.

This focus on action should strike us as puzzling if not problematic. Here in Part I, Hegel is still ostensibly talking about art *in general*. But most individual arts—architecture, sculpture, painting, and music—either preclude action entirely or include it in a limited way. Hegel briefly acknowledges that the repose of sculpted gods precludes action—a topic that he will return to in both his discussion of classical art and of sculpture (*Ä:I*, 230–233/175–177). But the bulk of his analysis of art's determinacy in Part I concerns action. Why might this be?

My argument will be that although Hegel does not say it explicitly, these sections lay the groundwork for his claim at the end of Part III that drama is the highest form of art. There Hegel gives an extensive account of drama—one appropriate to the elevated status that poetry in general and drama in particular enjoyed at the beginning of the German nineteenth century. Drama will ultimately achieve the reconciliation at the heart of Hegel's idealism by bringing subjective and objective together in embodied action. The self-understanding facilitated by that action will in turn facilitate the self-determination also crucial to that idealism.

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[31] The relevance of Hegel's theory of action has been central to Pippin's reading of his philosophy of art: see Pippin (2014), 38–39. See also Sandis (2010) and Quante (1993).

What, then, can drama teach us about action? In our daily lives, we simply act, usually without thinking about the factors both external and internal that shape those actions. This lack of reflection often means that the normative forces around us—moral imperatives, ethical habits, family structures, political realities—appear given. By Hegel's description, they are not. Both the *Philosophy of Right* and Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history argue that they are the outgrowth of a process of negotiation stretching back throughout the development of human self-legislation. Art can bring us to greater awareness of this history by making appropriate choices in the three components Hegel presents as comprising a plot: the general state of the world, the situation, and action proper.

A. The General State of the World

In order to act, a character "requires a surrounding world as the general ground for its realizations" (*Ä:I*, 235/179). This "general state of the world" depicts how "the concepts of ethics and law, and . . . justice, are activated" within a society (*Ä:I*, 235/179). In Homeric epics, for instance, laws are not yet codified and individuals are not yet attached to the stability of any regime. These individuals, then, are supremely independent. Hercules does exactly as he pleases, creating his own ethical world, as it were, in his wake. Because the hero instantiates authority on his own, he is "connected with his entire willing, acting, and achieving, so he also takes undivided responsibility for whatever consequences arise from his actions" (*Ä:I*, 246/187), Oedipus being the classic example.[32]

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[32] Compare A20, 42–44; H23, 74–77; K26, 76–85; and Hm28, 31–33. For a recent consideration of Hegel's discussion of Oedipus, see Falkenstern (2018).

The modern world, by contrast, is a "prosaic state of affairs": norms are codified and circumscribed into law. Hegel believes that the world is better for this development. And ultimately, he argues in Objective Spirit, modern humans *are* capable of being self-determining even within these systems of norms. But the ways in which this is true are opaque, technical, and require philosophical analysis—an analysis, fortunately for Hegel's readers, such as the one offered in the *Philosophy of Right*. However philosophically advanced, the resulting situation does not make good art. The "heroic individual is more ideal," Hegel writes: he seamlessly embodies self-determination in a way modern individuals cannot.

But modern artists have found ways to balance heroic individuals and the prosaic nature of modern life. Modern dramas are, for instance, often set in times of civil war in which norms break down and individuals are again required to be self-reliant. Such moments of social upheaval lay bare our otherwise hidden responsibility for the norms around us: the familiar becomes strange and we are able to reflect on our relationship to our ethical order. Schiller and Goethe offer modern examples, although not all are successful. Schiller's *Robbers* pits its hero against the entire society, giving him ample room for self-determination, but the play's Robin Hood–like "robber ideal," Hegel thinks, can only appeal to boys. *Kabale und Liebe*, by contrast, focuses too much on the "tiny details and passions" of its protagonists. Only in *Fiesco, Don Carlos*, and *Wallenstein* does Schiller succeed in making the characters embrace a sufficiently substantial matter, such as political liberation. Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* makes the emergence of modernity itself its theme, showing the "collision between the medieval heroic age and the legality of modern life" (*Ä:I*, 257/196). The task of modern artists such as Schiller and Goethe, then, is to choose general states of the world—configurations of morals and laws—that allow protagonists to exhibit their self-determination. A play simply depicting individuals doing their civic duties would not show the human freedom that persists despite prosaic life. Modern authors must, in other words, find ways of making the general state of the world poetic again.

B. The Situation

In addition to depicting the general state of the world, art must depict humans' reactions to the tensions that state produces. When the state of the world is combined with the heart of an individual who "moved by circumstances, feels itself induced to react," we have what Hegel calls the situation [*die Situation*] (*Ä:I*, 282/217).

What situations can best express the Ideal? What individual reactions to which circumstances can highlight the character's self-determination and so make familiar norms strange to the audience in ways that invite reflection? Some artworks, Hegel says, lack situation entirely, for instance Egyptian statues or busts of Christ. There are also works in which the situation is harmless, for instance Greek sculptures and lyric poetry. But the third category of situation, namely collision, is fertile territory for exposing components of action that have become too habitual for us to see clearly. Again, Hegel's aim here is to indicate what has to be true of an artwork in order for it to express the Idea: among other things, to remind us of our creative participation and our authority in the world. Some kinds of collisions do this more powerfully than others. Collisions with nature, for instance a natural catastrophe or illness, depict nature as a given, and so do not effectively put humans in mind of their co-determination with nature. Better examples are when the situation is connected to a spiritual concern, for instance problems with succession in *Oedipus* or *Macbeth* or political injustices such as "slavery, serfdom, castes, the position of Jews in many states" (*Ä:I*, 272/208). A third kind of conflict, however, even more closely achieves Hegel's goal, namely when we find "a transgression brought about by an actual human deed" which, in addition, violates "absolutely justified interests and powers" (*Ä:I*, 278/213).

C. Action Proper

The general state of the world sets the stage; the individual reacting to that state determines the situation. That reaction causes another reaction, and action proper results. Hegel is explicit about the importance of this outcome: "At this point only has the Ideal entered into full determinacy and movement. For now there stand in battle against one another two interests, wrested from their harmony, and in reciprocal contradiction they necessarily demand a resolution of their discord" (*Ä:I*, 282–283/217). How then can an artist depict action such that it brings our self-determination to our attention?

While the spectrum of possible human actions is vast, Hegel says that "the range of actions suitable for representation is on the whole restricted" (*Ä:I*, 285/219). He specifies three components of a depicted action that are accordingly necessitated by the Idea. The first is that the actions should be undertaken in the name of what Hegel calls universal powers. These are "the great themes of art, the eternal religious and ethical relationships; family, country, state, church, fame, friendship, class, dignity, and, in the romantic world, especially of honour and love, etc." (*Ä:I*, 286/220). The truly successful drama will show a conflict in which each side has some justification. Hegel again uses *Antigone* as his example, echoing his argument, familiar from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that both Antigone and Creon are acting on universal values (the family and the state, respectively), meaning that in neither case is the action irrational or unjustified.

Dramas that do not have universal powers at their core are inferior. Hegel complains, for instance, that the plot of Hartmann von Aue's twelfth-century poem *Der arme Heinrich* is occasioned by a "repulsive" collision involving a leper who can only be cured by the sacrifice of a young girl's life (*Ä:I*, 287/221). Hegel is similarly uneasy about plots that are "purely negative," simply depicting evil, baseness, or madness, a category in which he places both *King Lear* and the "grotesqueness of irony" typical of E. T. A. Hoffmann (*Ä:I*, 289/222–223).

Secondly, the individuals portrayed must be self-determining. Attributing motivation to the gods cannot express the Ideal since it would operate as a kind of given. The "genuinely ideal relationship" instead "consists in the identity of gods and men" (*Ä:I*, 295/227). We might be told, for instance, that Athena checks Achilles's wrath, but actually this is "an event which happened in the heart of Achilles" (*Ä:I*, 296/228). In modern art, the witches express Macbeth's own desires;

the ghost confirms Hamlet's pre-existing suspicions.[33] In short: in ideal works of art, "the gods seem to bring about what is alien to man and yet actually accomplish only what constitutes the substance of his inner heart" (*Ä:I*, 296/228).

Hegel also chooses another modern example, namely Goethe's reimagining of Euripides's *Iphigenia*, to illustrate this point. In the original plot, innocent victims of an unjust ruler, Thoas, are rescued by divine intervention. In Goethe's version, by contrast, Iphigenia, a human, brings about the denouement by calling on Thoas's "magnanimity and clemency, trusting on the height of his dignity . . . . She does not need the image of the goddess and can go away without cunning and treachery, since Goethe explains with infinite beauty, in a human reconciling way, the ambiguous oracle" (*Ä:I*, 298/229–230). Hegel finds this transformation deeply moving. "In this, as in every other respect, we cannot marvel enough at the deep beauty of the drama" (*Ä:I*, 299/230).

Thirdly, action requires character. Being a human character involves having a rich range of traits. "[T]o a true man many gods belong," Hegel says: "the whole of Olympus is assembled in his breast" (*Ä:I*, 307/237).[34] At the same time, "this fullness must appear as *concentrated* in *one* person and not as diffusion, freakishness, and mere diverse excitability" (*Ä:I*, 308–309/238). Characters, in effect, must be unified and purified the same way warts must be eliminated from portraits and extraneous events omitted from plots. They must, however, also not be over-simplified: one aspect should remain dominant, but the individual must also have the "opportunity to turn in many directions, to engage in a variety of situations" (*Ä:I*, 310/239). He gives Romeo as an example of someone who is chiefly defined by his love for Juliet, but whose character is given fuller expression through interactions with family and friends.

This definition of character leads Hegel to be critical of trends in modern art. He criticizes Corneille's *Le Cid* in which the main protagonist displays “splendid rhetoric and affecting monologues” but “is inherently contrary to solid decisiveness and unity of character” (*Ä:I*, 312/241). The principal characters in Racine’s *Phèdre*, Goethe’s *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, and Jacobi’s *Woldemar* are equally guilty of this fault. Hegel also takes the opportunity to criticize both irony and an outgrowth of the ironic standpoint which he calls the beautiful soul: a character who thinks itself too morally pure to engage with the world. If others cannot admire its “solitary beauty,” the beautiful soul is “infinitely injured”; “the most trifling matter . . . brings such a beautiful heart to the depths of despair.” Hegel has, as usual, no patience for this: it is, he says, “a property of a genuine character to have spirit and force to will and take hold of something actual” (*Ä:I*, 314/242). The Ideal can only be achieved if a character remains firm and unified.

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[33] How to assess the supernatural in Shakespeare's plays was one of the key points of disagreement regarding Shakespeare's value between, for instance, Lessing and Gottsched. See Gjesdal (2004), 23 and Gjesdal (2018), 253–254.

[34] Compare A20, 45–58; H23, 91–95; K26, 106–109; and H28, 34–36.

In addition to its plot, a drama must portray the setting in which character and action appear to us. This includes depicting “locality, time, climate,” as well as “tools and housing . . . weapons, seats, carriages”: “in short the whole variety of customs and usages in all situations and actions” (*Ä:I*, 317/245). If the goal of art is to help humans reflect on idealist truth, how can the world surrounding the protagonists be aestheticized? Here Hegel argues that artworks should have a measure of harmony and symmetry: a drama’s scenes and acts should be roughly uniform in length; music should balance harmony and discord; paintings should have a harmonious color scheme. Characters in the work must find an echo in their surroundings: Ossian’s heroes, for instance, are “tied to their moors where the wind whispers through the thistles, to their clouds, mists, hills, and dark glens” (*Ä:I*, 330/255). Good artists achieve this harmony fully; bad art (the *Nibelungenlied*, not for the last time, gets a critical mention here) in only a “poor and vague” way (*Ä:I*, 329/254).

Finally, Hegel asks how the work of art itself should interact with its own time: whether the artist should “keep his eye only on the past . . . or whether he is not only entitled but in duty bound to take account solely of his own nation and contemporaries” (*Ä:I*, 343/265). Both extremes are, predictably, false. Herder’s anthropological research into folksong, for instance, excessively favors the past, focusing too much on “historical exactitude and fidelity” (*Ä:I*, 349/270). At the other extreme, Hegel objects to Kotzebue's attempts to put before the public "merely its own casual subjectivity, i.e. the man in the street in his ordinary present activity and concerns." Audiences may enjoy seeing themselves so depicted, but "such subjectivity inherently fails to rise to the feeling and imagination of what constitutes the genuine content of the work of art" (*Ä:I*, 347/268). Such plays are simply not artistic enough; they mirror rather than transform our understanding of our world. Shakespeare, by contrast, often achieves this ideal. Goethe, in his retelling of *Iphigenie* and in his adaptation of Persian poetry in the *West-östliche Divan*, does as well.

When all of these criteria are met—when the right state of the world, situation, collision, action, character, and settings are united in a work that is "enjoyable by all ages and nations" (*Ä:I*, 343/265)—art is capable of making the Idea appear to our senses. Such a work will be best equipped to "disclose to us the higher interest of our spirit and will, what is in itself human and powerful, the true depths of the heart" (*Ä:I*, 361/279).

4. Idealism and Artistic Process

Having articulated these components of a dramatic artwork and how each component can best express ideal content, Hegel turns to the artist. What is an artist doing when she creates an artwork? What skills and talents does she draw on, and what kind of knowledge does she need? What role do imagination, genius, and inspiration play in the production of art? How do an artist's manner and style contribute to an artwork, and how can originality in art be achieved?[35]

Here again Hegel finds himself on the cusp of major developments in the conception of art. Eighteenth-century rationalist theories had given little if any place to the artist's own experience in the production of art. Lessing, as Beiser notes, had specified that the best art makes us forget the artist entirely since it so perfectly attains universal significance.[36] But the *Strum und Drang* movement of the late eighteenth century had instigated a rebellion against French neo-classicist rules by emphasizing emotion and inspiration. J. G. Hamann had become the philosophical champion of this movement and had placed a premium on artistic genius, which was itself evidence of artists' access to "superrational insights" that could only be expressed without the stricture of rules.[37] Although himself no supporter of *Sturm und Drang*, Kant had drawn more attention to the importance of genius by defining it, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, as "the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art."[38] Emphasis on artists' privileged access to truth through inspiration and the link between genius and nature had deeply formed Hegel's early philosophical convictions. It also provided the foundation for the early romantic convictions of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis.

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[35] See Speight's discussion of artistic practice at Speight (2008). Speight rightly emphasizes the artist's role in making implicit content explicit. While I agree that this is one way to characterize Part II's emphasis on worldviews, my emphasis on art as making the implicit explicit refers to Hegel's broader idealist commitments. See also Speight's helpful account of the difference between artists and artisans and his analysis of Hegel's theory of intention in art at Speight (2013), 135–158.

Given Hegel's exclusion of nature from art in his mature system, however, it is not surprising that he does not attribute artistic ability to nature. The capacity needed to make art in the first place, instead, is what Hegel calls *Phantasie*, translated as "creative imagination or fancy." *Phantasie*, Hegel argues in the *Encyclopedia*'s sections on Subjective Spirit, is the capacity to represent intuitions through signs, for instance in language.[39] By representing an intuition, say of a tree, through the word *tree*, creative imagination already, in Hegel's view, reconveys impressions of the external world to the spiritual. *Phantasie*, Hegel claims, is "the most prominent artistic ability"; it "involves the gift and the sense for grasping reality and its configurations which, attentively heard or seen, impress on the spirit the greatest multiplicity of pictures" (*Ä:I*, 363/281). The artist then combines this grasp of reality's multiplicity with "the rationality of the specific topics he has chosen" along with their "essentiality and truth in [the topic's] whole range and whole depth" (*Ä:I*, 365/282). An artist, in other words, will not only have keenly observed and grasped a wide range of detail; he will also have thought deeply for instance about love, jealousy, and justice.

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[36] Beiser (2009), 11. Hegel, as we will see, thinks the artist's disappearance into her work is required by some art forms and time periods but not others.

[37] See ibid., 233. See also the subsequent description of Mendelssohn's response to Hamann.

[38] Kant (2000), §46.

[39] On this constellation of concepts regarding artists, compare A20, 67–72; H23, 104–105; K26, 115–126; and Hm28, 41–44. For Hegel's dialectical progression from intuition (*Anschauung*) through modes of representation (*Vorstellung*) such as recollection (*Erinnerung*), reproductive imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), and creative imagination (*Phantasie*) and language, see *EPG*, §§446–459.

As to genius, Hegel laments the fact that art is no longer considered "a product of *general* human activity, but as a work of an entirely *specially gifted* spirit, which now, however, is supposed to give free play simply and only to its own particular gift, as if to a specific natural force" (*Ä:I*, 45/26). Hegel is willing to concede that some aspect of genius is natural—it is a capacity that an individual "has not the power to give to himself purely and simply through his own self-conscious activity" (*Ä:I*, 46/27). But we should not therefore conclude that art is all inspiration and caprice, preferably aided, Hegel insinuates, by "the good services of the champagne bottle" (*Ä:I*, 46/27). Instead of having raw, natural talent, the genius in Hegel's view is the person who can express his understanding of life's great themes through his wealth of experience. Hegel is thus closer to those like Herder or Sulzer who defined genius in terms of special capacities for observation, synthesis, and creativity than he is to Hamann's image of divine inspiration.[40] Even Goethe and Schiller—early if not permanent fixtures in *Sturm und Drang*'s rebellion—required reflection, practice, and skill to produce their masterpieces. Their early works, Hegel pronounces, lacked the experience that genius needs and were therefore full of "crudity and barbarity" (*Ä:I*, 47/28). Hegel here broaches a topic familiar from his political philosophy and that will resurface in his discussion of individual arts such as music: true freedom is not achieved when we follow our subjective impulses arbitrarily. It is instead achieved in mutual formation with norms around us: including, in this case, artistic norms.

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[40] According to Guyer, the general eighteenth-century definition of *genius* describes someone who "without laborious search perceives more" than others "rather than inventing" more (Guyer 2014, 70). In Herder's view, Gjesdal writes, "genius is the ability to articulate, in the concrete, sensuous form of an artwork, a particular cultural framework and thereby, potentially, expand its pool of available symbolic resources" (Gjesdal 2017, 136). See also Gjesdal (2004), 27. Lessing differentiated wit from genius with a similar definition: "While wit consists simply in the power to observe superficial similarities between things, genius has the power to create necessary connections between them" (Beiser 2009, 254). On A. W. Schlegel's idea of genius, see Ewton (1972), 47.

Inspiration is similarly balanced between subjectivity and objectivity: an artist cannot be inspired by purely external situations—the fresh breeze or sunny sky—or purely subjective feeling. Inspiration instead combines the artist's "subjective inner conception and his objective execution of the work of art" at which point he becomes "completely filled with the theme" and does not rest until it "has been stamped and polished into artistic shape" (*Ä:I*, 372–373/288). Even an artist's originality and style, Hegel argues, should not be explained in terms of pure subjectivity but as the product of interaction between the artist's own experience and the world around her. At every turn, in other words, Hegel's idealist commitment to showing that the artistic process is another example of mutual formation is clear. The activity that produces art can neither be governed by rules referring to a pre-existing harmony nor reduced to natural talent or subjective inspiration. It is instead a complex negotiation between artist and culture whose product allows others to experience the truths of idealism as well.

Even as it becomes clearer how these components of an artwork can come together to make the Idea appear to our senses, we begin to see ways that art can end. For something to be a work of art, it must, as it were, walk a very thin line, with the risk of diminished value threatening from many sides. A work loses aesthetic value if it comes too close to the ornamental or entertainment; if it becomes too pedantic or moralizing; if it proves too rule-bound, too imitative, or too subjective; if it becomes too realistic and so does not exhibit enough *Schein*. In short, it ends when it fails to convert the prosaic into the poetic and so fails to mirror philosophical truth. Art will also, as we will see in the next chapters, end in a more profound way historically when its religious significance is lost; it will end conceptually when it leaves the realm of the sensual and becomes philosophy. But in these early sections, Hegel has laid the groundwork for showing that even throughout these larger changes, art continues to end in smaller ways as well.

Hegel's discussion of his generation's artists such as Kotzebue, Goethe, Schiller, and Tieck makes clear that he thinks art continues. But for reasons he has only begun to intimate, it is indeed the case that the modern world makes the achievement of art more difficult. Goethe often strikes the right balance, as does Schiller. But others often fall short. When such artists manage to capture the Idea in sensuous appearance, they give us the pleasure of recognizing the unity of unity and division, of no longer seeing the world as given, and of recognizing the way we transform the world and are transformed by it. Artists poeticize the prosaic, using the tools Hegel here describes to highlight the spiritual in things we have come to think of as mundane. By causing us to reflect on the mutual transformation underlying reality, they give us a sense of our part in the true that is the whole. They give us, in short, a sensuous experience of truth. Hegel's next task will be to show how that experience plays out across the three particular forms of art.

PART II

THE PARTICULAR FORMS OF ART

2

Symbolic Art

The Distant Divine

1. The Particular Forms of Art: Introduction

After "studying artistic beauty in itself and on its own account" in Part I, Hegel announces, "we must see how beauty as a whole decomposes into its particular determinations [*wie das ganze Schöne sich in seine besonderen Bestimmungen zersetzt*]" (*Ä:I*, 107/75). This decomposition, to repeat, will happen in two separate ways: first, in the articulation of particular art forms, which comprise Part II of Hegel's lectures; second, in the differentiation of individual arts that takes place in Part III. The former is the subject of the next four chapters; the latter will be taken up in Chapters 6 through 11.

In Part II of his lectures, Hegel promises an "unfolding" [*Auseinanderbreitung*] of the "particularizations of the Idea" into the "*totality of particular stages and forms*" and then their reconciliation (*Ä:I*, 106–107/75, italics in original). These forms, he continues, "find their origin in the different ways of grasping the Idea as content"; each form expresses a different level at which humans understand the Idea, or the true that is the whole. The number and nature of the forms, then, "are nothing but the different relations of meaning and shape"—the different ways that humans' grasp of the Idea is given sensuous form (*Ä:I*, 107/75). Humans, as we know from the philosophy of history, have had better and worse understandings of the Idea. The particular forms of art are determined by the three corresponding ways that humans' grasp of the Idea, however adequate, takes form. Symbolic art results when humans have an *inadequate* grasp of the Idea and give it *inadequate* form; classical art results when humans have an *inadequate* grasp of the Idea but give it *adequate* form; romantic art results when humans have an *adequate* grasp of the Idea but give it *inadequate* form. An *adequate* understanding of the Idea given *adequate* form transcends the sensuous limits of art and transitions into philosophy.

Is Hegel's description of the particular forms of art primarily conceptual or historical? Its basic contours certainly track historical periods. The symbolic worldview flourished in pre-classical ancient civilizations, culminating with Egyptian art; the classical worldview characterizes ancient Greece; the romantic worldview describes the post-classical world of Christianity. But as we will see, there are instances especially of symbolic art in the modern world, suggesting that it is also a conceptual distinction. In this sense, Hegel's categories resemble Schiller's differentiation between naïve and sentimental poetry which, at least theoretically, designated dispositions—Goethe's on the one hand, Schiller's on the other—not fixed historical periods. But Schiller's categories, his own apparent intentions aside, had by the time of Hegel's lectures inspired a major historical classification. Goethe himself claimed that Schiller's juxtaposition of the naïve with the sentimental (which had, in Goethe's telling, resulted primarily from Schiller's desire to "defend himself against me") had inspired a more historical distinction between classicism and romanticism. By the time of Hegel's lectures, this classification had, again in Goethe's words, "spread over the whole world," occasioning "many quarrels and divisions."[1] It had essentially become an extension of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* that had raged since the early modern period.

For the purposes of understanding Hegel's discussion of particular forms of art, however, what is salient is not historical but conceptual. As we saw in the Introduction, Hegel thinks that history is the history of the developing consciousness of freedom, and the particular forms of art generally track this developing consciousness. Hegel's idealism argues that humans' consciousness of freedom requires their rejection of the given and their acknowledgment that we form and are formed by the world. The rejection of the given also involves rejecting the idea of a transcendent divine and an acceptance of humans' role as the sole source of normative authority and so as self-determining and free. This developing understanding of their own freedom and role in the world, especially as related to the divine, plays out prominently in Part II. Here, then, is where the emphasis on practical freedom which, as I argued in the Introduction, generally dominates interpretations of Hegel's philosophy of art, is most evident.

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[1] Goethe to Eckermann in 1830, quoted in Bubner (2003), 247.

In Chapter 1, we saw ways art could end: if it depicts a situation that is too prosaic, for example, or lapses into entertainment or moralizing. Several more endings become apparent in Hegel's description of particular art forms. With the dissolution of classical art, as we will see in Chapter 3, art undergoes what I have called its historical end as it shows how artists go from creating religion to merely depicting it. After this point, art loses its religious significance and its corresponding centrality to human life. But each of the particular art forms—symbolic, classical, and romantic—also reaches a paradigmatic instance derived, he claims, from the conceptual development of art itself. Once the pinnacle of each stage is reached, works that follow it can still be art, but they are no longer paradigmatic examples of that art form. Ultimately, each art form disintegrates into genres that fail to articulate the Idea, for instance agreeable sculpture, satire, the sublime, and subjective humor. At the conclusion of their development, the first two art forms reach their conceptual end and lead to the next form: symbolic to classical, classical to romantic. The conceptual end of particular art forms *in general* comes when romantic art exhausts its conceptual possibilities: after romantic art's inadequate form of adequate content, no further conceptual development within art is possible. Here too, art can also end in a much less epoch-defining way. It ends whenever a work is prosaic instead of poetic—when a work fails to be an appearance of the Idea to the senses. The origin of these ends can be traced to the emergence of art from ancient humans' earliest moments of reflection in what Hegel's generation still designated collectively as "the Orient." This is the point, both conceptually and historically, where Part II begins.

2. The Origins of Symbolic Art

By the time of Hegel's lectures on art, the pre-classical world, including ancient Indian and Egyptian civilizations, had been a source of fascination to German intellectuals for some time. Hamann and Herder were early enthusiasts in the eighteenth century, but momentum built significantly in the nineteenth century. In 1808, Friedrich Schlegel published *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*. Both Humboldt brothers were influential in establishing a chair in Sandskrit philology in Bonn in 1818; the first occupant of that chair was A. W. Schlegel.[2] Despite this fact, most of Hegel's contemporaries followed Goethe and Schiller in differentiating only between classical and romantic worldviews. Hegel's isolation of symbolic art as distinct enough to merit equal consideration alongside classical and romantic art was, in other words, not typical of his contemporaries.[3] This departure had, it seems, its roots in the work of his friend and colleague Georg Friedrich Creuzer. Creuzer's four-volume *Symbolism and Mythology of the Ancients, Especially the Greeks* had been published in 1810–12, inspiring a flurry of interest in ancient civilizations before Greece. It had also instigated an academic scandal known as the *Creuzerstreit* in which committed classicists such as Johann Heinrich Voss sought to prevent Creuzer and others from emphasizing Indian and Persian cultures to the detriment of ancient Greece.[4]

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[2] Marchand (2009), 95. See also Halbfass (1988).

[3] See Bell (1997), Bubner (2003), 223 ff., and Dieckmann (1959). This is not to say that defining the symbolic was not a topic of discussion. Goethe, for instance, was sharply critical of Winckelmann for failing to distinguish adequately between allegory and symbolism (Dieckmann 1959, 227). Schelling compares the symbolic to schematism and allegory, but he does not give it a separate treatment (Schelling 1989, §39). Dieckmann gives a fascinating analysis of A. W. Schlegel's and Novalis's views on the symbolic as well as Friedrich Schlegel's later insertion of the symbolic in his revision of his 1800 *Gespräch über die Poesie*; see Dieckmann (1959).

[4] Germana (2009), 131–169. Hegel references this dispute at *Ä:1*, 71/473. The study of "the Orient" also played into German national identity in complex ways. Some argued that Germans had a special affinity with India because of both cultures' oppression by other powers and lack of political unity. See Germana (2009), 215–222. Others saw the study of India as anti-Enlightenment and even Catholic. Goethe, Marchand writes, "dismissed [F. Schlegel's] *Sprache und Weisheit [der Indier]* simply as veiled Catholic apologetics" (Marchand 2009, 65). Voss also objected to "Indomania" on the grounds that it was associated with a Catholic tendency to be nostalgic for the Middle Ages. See Germana (2009), 166.

Hegel cites Creuzer regularly, if not always uncritically, and adopts several of Creuzer's primary distinctions. Foremost among these is Hegel's claim that symbolism requires a definitive break between the divine content being expressed and the art object meant to express it. Guided by his definition of art as a sensuous expression of the Idea and the Idea as the unity of unity and division, Hegel generally classifies the symbolic period as a kind of pre-art produced by inadequate conceptions of the divine. The Eurocentric implications of this assessment are clear, and the fact that they were not shared by some of Hegel's contemporaries, for instance Herder, means that his often prejudicial conclusions cannot be excused by historical ignorance.

In general, Hegel suggests, symbols consist of a meaning and an expression: the meaning "is an idea or topic, no matter what its content" while the expression "is a sensuous existent or a picture of some kind or other" (*Ä:I*, 394/304). Symbols must strike a balance. On the one hand, a symbol cannot be a simply random pairing of meaning and expression: the colors of a ship's flag, for instance, have "no quality in common with their meaning"; they are only arbitrarily linked to the ship itself and so are a "mere sign" (*Ä:I*, 395/304).[5] A symbol, by contrast, must have some connection with the thing symbolized: a circle can symbolize eternity since it has no beginning or end; a fox can represent cunning since foxes are, in fact, cunning. Insofar as it achieves this connection, a symbol can become art since art as such, Hegel says, "consists precisely in the kinship, relation, and concrete interpenetration of meaning and shape" (*Ä:I*, 395/304).

On the other hand, however, the symbol must also not be entirely adequate to its meaning; a symbol whose meaning and content overlap too closely is no longer a symbol. Symbols must point beyond themselves to a "meaning which is something wider and deeper than they are" (*Ä:I*, 400/308). They by definition then include a kind of distortion, Hegel says: symbolic art "corrupts and falsifies the shapes that it finds confronting it"; the harmony it forges between meaning and shape is only abstract (*Ä:I*, 390/300). Symbols elicit a sense of puzzlement: when we encounter ancient civilizations whose art is primarily symbolic, "our footing is not really secure; we feel that we are wandering amongst *tasks*" [*wir fühlen, daß wir unter* Aufgaben *wandeln*] (*Ä:I*, 400/308, translation modified).

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[5] On the significance of the difference between symbols and signs for Hegel's contemporaries, see Frank (1982), 107ff.

Because it strives for but does not fully achieve unity, Hegel calls symbolic art the "threshold of art," or *Vorkunst* (*Ä:I*, 408/314). But even before true art begins, there are several preliminary stages in which some of the characteristics of symbolic art are present but not fully enough to qualify as symbolic art proper. These initial stages Hegel classifies as "Unconscious Symbolism" and "Fantastical Symbolism."

3. The Battle between Meaning and Shape: Unconscious and Fantastical Symbolism

At the beginning of art's conceptual development, Hegel imagines the earliest human living in unreflective harmony with nature. But at some point, this human stops relating to the world only through the practical lens of desire; he "stands back spiritually from nature and his own singularity" and "seeks and sees in things a universal, implicit, and permanent element" (*Ä:I*, 408/315). In a moment reminiscent of Hegel's account of early encounters with objects in his theoretical works, this reflection means that "for the first time natural objects strike him; they are an 'other' which yet is meant to be for his apprehension and in which he strives to find himself over again."[6] He develops an "inkling of something higher" as well as a sense of a "contradiction between natural things and the spirit" (*Ä:I*, 408/315). This in turn motivates "an urge to remove" this contradiction.

The early human's first attempt at this resolution is to set nature "over against himself" and "reverence[] it as power" (*Ä:I*, 409/315). In this stage of "unconscious symbolism," rivers, trees, or the moon are deified.[7] Zoroastrianism, to take one of Hegel's specific examples, reverences light as the divine. In such cases, Hegel says, neither form nor content is "generated by the spirit; on the contrary . . . what is really present—the sun, the stars, actual plants, animals, men, existent fire—is apprehended as the Absolute's shape" (*Ä:I*, 428/331). These early religions nevertheless begin to produce borderline cases of art as soon as they form *representations* of these natural entities as gods, lifting the natural into the realm of ideas. Such works are poetic in the sense that "neither the individual objects in nature nor individual human attitudes, situations, deeds, actions, are to be construed in their immediate and therefore accidental and prosaic lack of significance" (*Ä:I*, 428/331).

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[6] See, for instance, Hegel's account of stages of consciousness in *EPG*, §§413ff.

[7] Hegel's description of this stage of symbolism varies across the lecture transcripts: he variously characterizes it as "*das Natursymbol*" (A20, 74), "*Verehrung der Naturkörper*"

Nevertheless, unconscious symbolism is technically neither symbolic nor art: it "only builds the road to both" (*Ä:I*, 413/319). It is not symbolic because it does not take the separation of spiritual from nature seriously: it depicts the "immediate substantial unity of the Absolute as spiritual meaning with its unseparated sensuous existence in a natural shape" (*Ä:I*, 413/319). It is not art because neither form nor content is, "as art demands, formed, shaped, and invented by the spirit" (*Ä:I*, 428/331). Instead, both content and form are depicted as independently determined. The divine, as the *content* humans are trying to express, is fully determined by its appearance in nature: the divine simply *is* the river or moon. The *form* that content takes is equally determined: "what is really present—the sun, the stars, actual plants, animals, men, existent fire—is apprehended as the Absolute's shape which is already in its *immediacy* adequate thereto" (*Ä:I*, 428/331). Although such a work is a step beyond "bad and senseless idols," it "never reaches art" (*Ä:I*, 428/331).

Once consciousness leaves the identity of divine and nature behind, "the battle between meaning and shape" begins (*Ä:I*, 430/333). The combative imagery is striking and reminiscent of Hegel's description of symbolic art also in the *Encyclopedia* where he characterizes it as a "wrestling" and as "restless and unappeased effort which throws itself into shape after shape" (*EPG*, §561). In this second phase, "the

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(H23, 114), "*die ganz substantielle Einheit des Gedankens und des Äußerlichen*" (K26, 138), and "*die unmittelbare Einheit*" (Hm28, 47). Generally speaking, Hegel's differentiation of symbolism's stages among the lecture cycles is fluid.

universal meanings lift themselves explicitly above the single natural phenomena" but still "come into consciousness again in the form of concrete natural objects" (*Ä:I*, 41/319). The divine, for instance, is not *this* river exclusively, but it can still be represented in natural form. Since the divine is not limited to a particular, found natural entity, this depiction comes closer to symbolism.

At the same time, the division between form and content is now more evident, "immediately provok[ing] the attempt to heal the breach again by building the separated parts together in a fanciful way" (*Ä:I*, 430/333). This constitutes the first "proper need for art" in the sense that art, as the sensuous expression of the Idea, must depict the *conscious unity* of form and content (*Ä:I*, 430/333). Now that the two have come apart, art can bring them together in a meaningful way. Since meaning can no longer be read off of nature, "the task is set before spirit of giving for contemplation and perception . . . a richly fanciful shape to universal ideas and *in this activity* creating artistic productions" (*Ä:I*, 430/333). Here humans have reached a middle position, Hegel says, "between the purely spiritless immersion in nature and the spirituality altogether freed therefrom" (*Ä:I*, 410/316). This middle position "is, in general, the standpoint of poetry and art in distinction from that of the prosaic intellect" (*Ä:I*, 410/316). Poetry in the broader sense is created here because humans are neither completely immersed in nature nor essentially separated from it; instead, they are struggling to reestablish a lost unity between spirit and nature. Hegel also calls this moment, when humans, however vaguely, sense their role in reestablishing this unity, "the first knowledge of truth" (*Ä:I*, 410/316).

But initial attempts at indicating this unity are confused, and although we have reached "the beginning of art" (*Ä:I*, 409/316), Hegel remains reluctant to endorse the initial results as *fully* art. In a period he calls "Fantastical Symbolism," Hegel describes how humans' first attempt to articulate the divine as separate from nature resulted in their conceiving of the divine as abstract and indefinable. Ancient Indian culture, he argues, thought of the divine "as what in itself is purely universal, undifferentiated, and therefore completely indeterminate" (*Ä:I*, 433/335). Given its abstraction, the divine could be associated with "no particular content" and so affords no "material which intuition could shape in some way or other" (*Ä:I*, 433/335). Indian religion's conception of God means that no ordinary natural form can be adequate to the Absolute (a problem that will resurface in the sublime); the only way artists can portray the union between spirit and nature is by distorting nature. They therefore produce "monstrous extravagance[s] of the fantastic," "crazing and crazedness" (*Ä:I*, 432/335). Some of Hegel's contemporaries, for instance Herder, had seen in these fantastical and sometimes sexualized forms evidence of a healthy and noble natural innocence.[8] Hegel, by contrast, describes it as grotesque: arms and heads multiply, chronology and geography are distorted. And although this art does unite form and content, the particular forms *are* actually the divine, rather than "indicating" it; these forms therefore cannot be "strictly called symbolical" (*Ä:I*, 438/339). Hegel is also concerned that this conception of the divine means individuals cannot be reconciled, for example, to Brahma: unity with such a divine is only achieved with the evaporation of consciousness and when "the inner worth of the man's own personality totally disappears" (*Ä:I*, 433/335). A religion that demands not conscious reunification with the divine but annihilation of the individual cannot, Hegel thinks, express the truth about humans' mutually determining status with the world.

4. The Egyptian World and Symbolism Proper

In unconscious symbolism, both the form and the content were given: the divine was the power of a river, for instance, embodied in a representation of that river. In fantastical symbolism, content was abstract and form was arbitrary: what counted as divine was indeterminate, so the representation of the divine took fantastical shape.

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[8] See Germana (2009), 219–222. Hegel was also influenced by Wilhelm von Humboldt's work on Sanskrit and on Indian religion, although the two men's approaches to the study of ancient Indian cultures were divergent enough for Humboldt to protest about Hegel's review of his work that it was a misleading mixture of "philosophy and fable, real and unreal, ancient, and modern: what kind of philosophical history can that produce?" See Menze (1986), 285.

Symbolic art proper is only possible when a culture articulates a specific realm of the spiritual (rather than equating natural and spiritual) and then looks for appropriate sensuous expression that is itself not natural. There is a turn, in other words, from representation of *given* content to representation of *generated* content. Both form and content, in such a case, are not found but produced by spirit. The Egyptians, Hegel thinks, were the first to accomplish both sides of this equation.[9] They achieved the free realm of the spiritual by conceptualizing the opposite of natural life, namely death, then postulating "an independent realm of the dead in contrast to the presence of what is immediately real" (*Ä:I*, 459/355). That spiritual world of the dead then became art's content. Already this general content has significant consequences for ethical life. Articulating the spiritual in terms of the "universal dialectic of life—birth, growth, passing away, and rebirth out of death" means that substantial human concerns become the particular content being symbolized (*Ä:I*, 452/351). Defined by these cycles that also define humans, the divine is less distant. Even more significantly, this spiritual realm allowed Egyptian artists to conceive of the soul as immortal, a belief that "lies very close to the freedom of the spirit" since "the self comprehends itself as withdrawn from the naturalness of existence and as resting on itself": a knowledge that is, Hegel says, "the principle of freedom" (*Ä:I*, 458/355).

The very fact that the content is determined means that fantastical and distorted forms are no longer appropriate. Artists look instead for a closer interpenetration of meaning and expression. Their task is now to find the most fitting representation for art's content; instead of distortions of nature, we thus see "a circumspect choice between symbolizing shapes," and the "restless frenzy is quieted into a more intelligent sobriety" (*Ä:I*, 453/350). Egyptian artists find representation adequate to spiritual meaning by constructing "labyrinths under the soil," "chambers adorned with hieroglyphics," and, most importantly, pyramids.

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[9] For Friedrich Schlegel on Egypt's significance, especially its relation to India, see Germana (2009), 138.

It is testament to their symbolic nature that the meaning of the pyramids long remained a mystery, even if now their function as burial places seems clear. By gesturing at the realm of the dead, Hegel continues, the pyramids "put before our eyes the *simple prototype of symbolical art itself*; they are prodigious crystals which conceal in themselves an inner meaning," "an external environment in which an inner meaning rests concealed" (*Ä:I*, 459/356, italics mine). The closer relation between symbol and symbolized recalls the unity of earlier depictions of nature *as* divine, but "with the difference that the identity of the meaning with its real existence is no longer an immediate unification but one re-established out of difference and therefore not just met with but *produced* by spirit" (*Ä:I*, 453/351). Because of this independent content and appropriate representation, Egyptian art is the "strictly symbolic" art (*Ä:I*, 452/350). Here finally Hegel is willing to speak of art proper: "Only when the inner becomes free and yet preserves the impulse to picture to itself, in a real shape, what it is in its essence, and to have this very picture before itself as also an external work, *only then does there begin the proper impulse towards art*" (*Ä:I*, 453/351, italics mine). Here, then, we have reached the end of art's beginning and can speak of art in the technical sense.

Hegel mentions three further examples of paradigmatic symbolism in Egyptian art. The first are the Colossi of Memnon: massive statues of Pharaoh Amenhotep built to guard his temple (see Figure 2.1). In the ancient world, these statues were reputed to emit sounds at sunrise. This phenomena has, Hegel suggests, a natural explanation having to do with "minerals which rustle in water" and the "dew and the cool of the morning" (*Ä:I*, 462/358). But even this explanation has symbolic significance. It indicates the Egyptian belief that human forms "do not have the spiritual soul freely in themselves and therefore . . . they require for it light from without which alone liberates the note of the soul from them" (*Ä:I*, 462/358). The "inner life of the human form is still dumb in Egypt," Hegel concludes, "and in its animation it is only a natural factor that is kept in view" (*Ä:I*, 462/358). The content of this image correlates to an Egyptian belief about the spiritual world, namely its need for the natural to help it express itself; this content is embodied in a statue that requires nature to give it a voice.

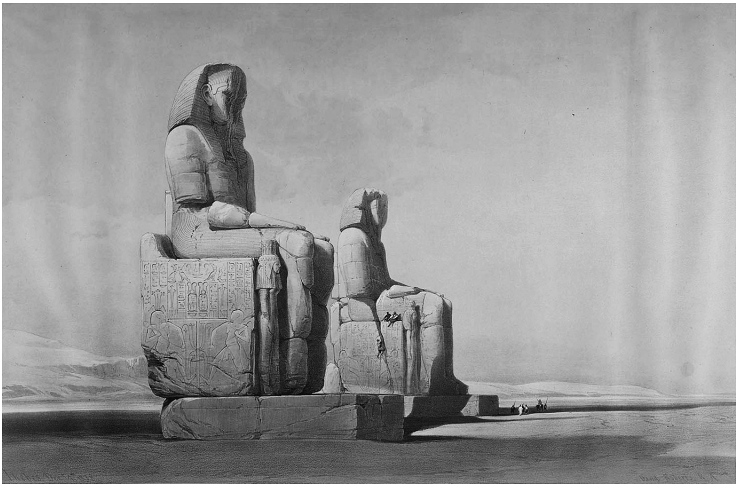

Figure 2.1 David Roberts, *The Memnon Colossi at Thebes*, 1838.

The second example is the myth of Isis and Osiris. On the one hand, Osiris is conceived, born, killed, and resurrected: a story that symbolizes the seasonal cycles of the Nile. On the other, "Osiris means humanity itself: he is held sacred as the founder of agriculture, of the demarcation of fields, or property, of laws" (*Ä:I*, 463/359). But even as the myth of Osiris bridges the natural and the spiritual, it prefigures the end of symbolic art. In the portrayal of Osiris's relation to human spirituality, "the symbolical begins to disappear, because here the inner and the spiritual becomes itself the content of the human form which thereby begins to portray its own inner being" (*Ä:I*, 463/359). Egyptian art here, it seems, hints at the perfect unity of form and content that will characterize classical Greek sculpture. Insofar as it approaches that unity, symbolic art begins to dissolve. But in general, Egyptian mythological figures remain "only a symbol of spirit," trapped as it were in exaggerated human form. They are "colossal, serious, petrified; legs without freedom and serene distinctness, arms and head closely and firmly affixed . . . without grace and living movement" (*Ä:I*, 464/360).

The sphinx, however, is what Hegel calls “the symbol of the symbolic” and “the symbolic as such” (*Ä:I*, 465/360). Even more than colossal, unnatural human statues, the sphinx symbolizes the human attempting to emerge from the animal. The transition to classical art continues as the sphinx—itself a riddle—poses a riddle that penetrates Greek mythology. The sphinx demands to know what walks on four feet in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening: humans unable to recognize themselves, as humans, as the riddle’s solution, subsequently perish. When Oedipus recognizes himself, as a human, as the riddle’s solution, and so defeats the sphinx, he begins to bridge Egypt’s symbolism to classical art: “The explanation of the symbol lies in the absolute meaning, in the spirit, just as the famous Greek inscription calls to man: Know thyself” (*Ä:I*, 466/361).

Oedipus’s ability to know his human self as the answer to the sphinx’s riddle represents a clear progression of the consciousness of freedom that will continue to develop in classical art’s interpenetration of human and divine. But before the transition to classical art is accomplished, symbolic art’s unification of spiritual and sensible unravels, creating several artistic sub-genres. This unraveling represents a first example of an ending within a particular form.

5. A God Everywhere or Nowhere: Sublime Art

The first example of a derivative form is the art of the sublime. By conceptualizing the world of the dead, Egyptian art articulated a sphere that was independent of the natural. The sublime, in Hegel’s description, expands this sphere to account for the divine completely. The sublime god is fully supernatural, beyond comprehension or representation. Sublime *art* must then be “the attempt to express the infinite, without finding in the sphere of phenomena an object which proves adequate for this representation” (*Ä:I*, 467/363). The divine as portrayed in fantastical symbolism was similarly abstract, but it still found expression in natural beings, however distorted. But from the point of view of the sublime, any attempt at representation is “annihilated in turn by what it reveals, so that the revelation of the content is at the same time a supersession of the revelation" (*Ä:I*, 467/363). Sublime art, in other words, can only reveal its conception of the divine through inadequately expressing it, thus indicating its overwhelming power. This limitation means that "the strictly symbolical character vanishes" (*Ä:I*, 468/363): the paradigmatically symbolic work of art, in which a spiritual idea is symbolized by a physical object, is no longer possible. Sensual representation is by definition undermined by the idea of an infinite, all-powerful god; most sublime art appears in the least embodied form of art, namely poetry, although that, too, is by definition inadequate.

The sublime expresses itself in an affirmative and a negative mode.[10] The affirmative sublime is found first in the pantheism of newer Indian poetry in which the divine is "envisaged as immanent in all its created accidents" (*Ä:I*, 469/364): it is, in other words, everything and everywhere. But the ubiquity of the divine in Hegel's view actually devalues its instances. The *Bhagavad Gita*, for instance, describes Krishna as in all the world's elements, in "the taste in flowing water, the splendour in the sun and moon . . . the pure fragrance of the earth" (*Ä:I*, 473/367). But since everything is God, nothing—not even the human—has any particular value. True to his claim that history and art reflect and form each other, Hegel finds that this sublime worldview is reflected not only in art but in political life. The belief that god is everywhere, Hegel says, results in religious and political despotism since the subject, in "losing his self, is submerged in the one universal substance, or in some particular aspect of it, since he has no right and therefore no support in himself as a person" (*Ä:I*, 25/436). The historically despotic tendencies of Eastern cultures, as Hegel—again no doubt incompletely—understands them, resulted from individuals seeing themselves as lost in and completely subjected to a universal substance.

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[10] As Donougho points out, Hegel substantially reworks the ordering of these sections over his four lecture courses in Berlin. Hotho's edition "returns to the 1823 tripartite structure, where the second chapter encompasses the sublime, dividing it into two (as in 1826) while placing the *negative* sublime (e.g., biblical poetry) after the positive (e.g., Persian poetry), as in 1828/29" (Donougho 2001, 7).

In Persian poetry especially, we find another version of pantheism, but this time with more positive connotations. The poet sees himself as an instance of the divine; he "sacrifices his own personality, but he all the same apprehends the immanence of the Divine in his inner being thus enlarged and freed" (*Ä:I*, 474/368). In this poetry, which Hegel, as we will see again in Chapter 5, clearly admires, "the immanence of the Divine in objects exalts mundane, natural, and humane existence itself into a more independent glory of its own"; it is able to grow "into the most blissful and cheerful intimacy with objects in nature and their splendour" (*Ä:I*, 474/369). Although Hegel chiefly describes this exalting of the mundane as a historical phenomenon, he also mentions instances of a similar sensibility in his own age. Goethe in his later years, Hegel reports, developed a "broad and carefree serenity" inspired by "the breath of the East, and with his soul filled with boundless bliss, turn[ed] in the poetic fervor of his heart to this freedom of feeling" (*Ä:I*, 477/370). The artist's ability to enliven objects through his description of them will resurface in Hegel's depiction of objective humor. Since by then modern, Christian subjectivity will have disrupted any simple identification with the divine, Western adaptations of this kind of sublime remain "rather unhappy, unfree, and wistful"; European poetry's use of traditional Persian symbols such as the nightingale are "more prosaic" (*Ä:I*, 476/370).[11]

The second, negative mode of the sublime is found in Hebrew poetry that depicts the infinite power of God as opposed to his finite creatures. Even nature's magnificence is represented as only an "accident and a transient show in comparison with God's being and stability" (*Ä:I*, 469/364). The negative symbolic worldview also depicts God as withdrawing from the world after its creation. Here for the first time "nature and the human form confront us as prosaic and bereft of God" (*Ä:I*, 482/374). Nature becomes predictable and explicable. When God appears, it is not from within nature but as interrupting it through miracles.

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[11] The fact that Hegel considers modern and Christian examples of the affirmative sublime at all, including Christian mysticism (see *A:I*, 478/371), is further evidence that symbolic art is not restricted to the pre-classical world and Part II is not tracing an exclusively chronological development.

In discussing Hebrew scriptures as poetry in the first place, Hegel builds on a tradition reaching back to the reception of Robert Lowth, a bishop whose 1753 lectures at Oxford had argued for the Psalms as an artistic form. This suggestion had influenced Lessing's interpretation of Judaism and Herder's 1782 "On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry."[12] But despite his acknowledgment of the poetic value of these ancient texts, Hegel's general conclusion is that the theological position revealed there, namely God's simultaneous lordship over and absence from the world, has negative consequences for art. "[D]egradation and servitude is the one and only way whereby the *one* God can be illustrated in art; this is because the one God is explicitly without shape and is incapable of expression in his *positive* essence in anything finite or mundane" (*Ä:I*, 479/372). God, in other words, cannot be depicted. The artist can only seek "his own honour, consolation, and satisfaction in this recognition of the nullity of things and in the exaltation and praise of God" (*Ä:I*, 483/375). This is the worldview that produced the Hebrew Psalms which Hegel calls "classic examples of genuine sublimity" (*Ä:I*, 483/375). Here, he says, "we have to marvel at the force of the *elevation* of the mind which abandons everything in order to declare the exclusive power of God" (*Ä:I*, 484/375).

As so often in Hegel's philosophy, a loss produces a gain. Hegel's comments about Judaism over his lifetime range from clearly prejudicial to generally enlightened, but in his lectures on aesthetics, he is admiring of both Hebrew poetry and its political ramifications.[13] In this case, God's withdrawal from the world contributes to the development of the consciousness of freedom. The Hebrew psalmist knew himself to be nothing as compared to God; and "within this nullity man nevertheless gains a freer and more independent position" (*Ä:I*, 485/376). God's absolute nature and constancy mean that his commandments become consistent, eternal laws that form the basis for political organization. God's complete separation from humans means that "the judgement of good and evil, and the decision for one or the other, is transferred to the subject himself" (*Ä:I*, 485/377). The subject begins to cultivate self-assessment against internalized divine commands. Although Hegel ultimately believes that the sublime portrayal of God is inaccurate, the idea of humans as responsible for their own actions is a significant gain in their consciousness of freedom.

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[12] See Prickett (2017).

[13] Compare, for instance, his early writings on Judaism in "The Spirit of Christianity" in *FS* (274–418) to those at *PR*, §270.

Given the prominence of the sublime in the aesthetic discourse of Hegel's generation, the fact that these examples constitute the sum total of Hegel's comments on the subject is remarkable.[14] Early rationalist accounts, such as Baumgarten's, had taken the sublime seriously as a species of the beautiful. Mendelssohn introduced the idea of the sublime as a pleasurable terror, but Mendelssohn himself ultimately concluded that the sublime exhibited an "extraordinary degree of perfection" and so was still subsumed under the beautiful.[15] Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* had interrupted this connection by divorcing the beautiful from the sublime and by affiliating the sublime with two specifically rational experiences. Sublime pleasure in the first instance, Kant claimed, comes from our ability to infer more than we can sense—to infer infinity from the starry sky—and the satisfaction that comes from this evidence of reason's superiority over our senses. The second sense results from our awareness that our rational natures can withstand the threat of our physical destruction.[16]

In both cases, Kant limited experience of the sublime to the natural world. But its implications for art were quickly taken up by Schiller, who argued for the place of the sublime, especially in explaining the pleasure we take in tragedy: the pleasure of knowing, through the tragic hero's example, that we are capable of asserting our freedom in the face of catastrophe. Schiller also suggested that the sublime is not humans' greatest achievement; the gentler harmony of beauty shows humans achieving their highest potential. But the sublime, he says, exists to remind us of what we can be when called upon to assert our freedom.[17]

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[14] As Bubner points out, what Hegel *does* collect under the heading of the sublime is also surprising: "we might well ask why anyone should ever have dreamed of combining oriental cultic practices, the products of didactic poetry, and the hallowed doctrine of the sublime in some dialectical triad in the first place" (Bubner 2003, 225). Bubner also makes the promising suggestion that symbolic art on Hegel's view could allow us to think about aesthetic experience more generally—independent, that is, of something explicitly characterized as an *artwork* (ibid., 229).

[15] See Beiser (2009), 217–221 and Martyn, 35–36.

[16] Kant (1990), §23ff.

That Hegel has nothing to say about the natural sublime follows from his restriction of beauty to art. But what of his silence about its other forms: its relation to perfection or its role in allowing us to assert our freedom? Bubner is perhaps right that the sublime is simply displaced by the "exclusive Hegelian emphasis upon the domain of fine art": Hegel does not want to include examples of extreme or contradictory emotion in his understanding of beauty.[18] But his opposition seems to me to go deeper. Hegel's resistance to Schiller's use of the sublime in the tragic, I think, has to do with the definition of freedom that Hegel is defending as part of his idealism. Full freedom in Hegel's scheme will never be won in defiance of nature or in moments of extreme challenge. The freedom of ethical life is exhibited instead through the more mundane accomplishment of recognizing other humans' humanity and embedding that recognition in institutions. Such achievements are not the stuff of tragedy but require patient working out of what we mean by our claim that all humans should be free—all of the work that, as I suggested in the Introduction, remains to be done.

Not all implications of this interpretation, however, are positive. It is possible that Hegel's rejection of the heroic freedom associated with the sublime makes him the bourgeois philosopher that some have accused him of being. Paul de Man, for instance, called the sublime the "defective cornerstone" of Hegel's entire system because of its clear marginalization of the irrational and elevation of the institutional.[19] Indeed: in other contexts, Hegel clearly opposes what he sees as irrational or anti-Enlightenment trends in the romantic movement, whether in its emphasis on the uncanny, its obsession with the Middle

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[17] Schiller is not always consistent on these points. For analysis of these essays, see Beiser (2005) and Moland (2017). Hegel briefly mentions "On Grace and Dignity" in his lectures on aesthetics, noting that Schiller should take credit for "breaking through the Kantian subjectivity" and for seeing the beautiful as "the mutual formation of the rational and the sensuous" (*A:I*, 91/61–62). But he does not elaborate on the themes discussed here.

[18] Bubner (2003), 225.

[19] See Donougho (2001), 1.

Ages, or some of its early adherents' conversions to Catholicism. Insofar as Hegel, despite his friendship with Creuzer, would have agreed with Voss in fearing these trends, he may well have wanted to minimize the importance of Indian culture. Just as seriously, Hegel's relegation of the sublime to ancient, non-European civilizations perhaps indicates, as Donougho has argued, a desire to keep the sublime at a "historical distance" along with civilizations he clearly considers resigned to the past. This last possibility is unfortunately supported by Hegel's often deplorable comments about non-European cultures, making his relegation of the sublime to the "pre-art" of non-European cultures one of the more incriminating moments within his aesthetics.[20]

6. Conscious Symbolism from Fables to Epigrams

Symbolic art from the beginning sought combinations of meaning and form that were not arbitrary but also preserved some distinction. The Egyptian cult of the dead was not fully expressed in the pyramids, but neither was their relationship arbitrary. The same is true in sublime art. In both Persian and Hebrew poetry, the relation between the meaning and its appearance "belonged to the substance itself which in the negativity of its accidents gave proof of its wisdom, goodness, might, and justice" (*Ä:I*, 486/378). In sublime art, Hegel says, "the relation of meaning and shape is here of a still essential and necessary kind, and the two linked sides have not yet become external to one another" (*Ä:I*, 486/378).

But in art's next phase, the link indeed becomes external in the sense that it is not an expression of a worldview but produced by an artist with the aim of creating a particular impression. This Hegel calls "conscious symbolism, or, more precisely, the *comparative* form of art" (*Ä:I*, 486/378).[21] *Unconscious* symbolism, we remember, began when the unity between the Absolute and the physical world was "not produced by art but found, without art, in actual natural objects and human activities" (*Ä:I*, 419/323). In *conscious* symbolism, by contrast, the artist explicitly aims to achieve an effect. Hegel's examples of conscious symbolism range from fables to allegory to metaphor. In each case, a meaning is joined to an image, whether visual or written, and the resulting unity is a "more or less accidental concatenation produced by the subjective activity of the poet . . . by his wit and his invention in general" (*Ä:I*, 487/378). The artist either chooses an object and uses his imagination to connect it to a meaning or begins with a meaning and then chooses an object.

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[20] See for instance *VPG*, 108–81. On this topic, see also Bernasconi (1998).

[21] Again the placement of these sections and their internal ordering varies among the lecture cycles: see A20, 83ff.; H23, 130ff.; K26, 163ff.; and Hm28, 55ff.

Tellingly, Hegel calls these efforts prosaic—his term signifying that a work has failed his standards for artistic achievement. Conscious symbolism consists of a "clear but superficial [mode of] treatment which, limited in its content and more or less prosaic in its form, deserts the mysteriously fermenting depth of the symbol proper, and strays down from the height of sublimity into common consciousness" (*Ä:I*, 488/380). Hegel's objection here seems to be that while symbolic art up to this point struggled to give form to a meaning beyond its control, in conscious symbolism the artist's main goal is showing off his wit in representing a pre-determined meaning or portraying some everyday occurrence. In Aesop's fables, for instance, animals are not mysterious or divine but deployed to deliver specific lessons: Aesop treats them "with prosaic eyes . . . without poetry and philosophy" (*Ä:I*, 497/387). Hegel thus follows both Goethe and Creuzer in elevating the symbolic over the allegorical.[22] Allegory begins with a quality such as love or a concept from the natural world such as autumn and then seeks the right image, often of a human, to express it. But the resulting personifications are so obvious, Hegel complains, that they "appear degraded into purely external signs" (*Ä:I*, 516/403). The "figurative in general"—which includes metaphor, image, and simile—also produces meanings too obvious to be symbolic (*Ä:I*, 516/403). The two components a metaphor brings together, for instance, are too often "wholly external to one another" (*Ä:I*, 540/422): they do not attempt to articulate an underlying unity but achieve their effect through contrast. Hegel is not against these forms of speech as such and admits that they often enrich, for instance, Shakespeare's dialogues. But they should "only appear in genuine works of art as mere accessories" and are not themselves examples of art (*Ä:I*, 508/396).

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[22] On Creuzer, see Frank (1982), 89–95. On Goethe, see Bell (1997). On early romantic writers' positions on this topic, see Mininger (2016), 101.

7. The Descriptive, the Didactic, and the Prosaic Ends of Symbolic Art

The "subordinate forms" that complete symbolism's dissolution are didactic and descriptive poetry. Didactic poetry already has "the content cut and dried and developed explicitly as meaning in its therefore prosaic form." It simply adds "the artistic shape which yet can only be tacked on to the content in an entirely external way," often to convey a serious message by being entertaining (*Ä:I*, 542/423). Lucretius's natural philosophy and Virgil's agricultural instructions are "examples of such a treatment which, despite all skillfulness, cannot attain a genuine free form of art" (*Ä:I*, 542/423). "What has become prosaic in itself," Hegel concludes, "is not to be reshaped poetically; it can only be dressed up" (*Ä:I*, 542/423). Descriptive poetry, by contrast, depicts "seasons, times of day . . . a lake or a murmuring burn, a churchyard, a friendly situated village, or a quiet cozy cottage" (*Ä:I*, 543/424) and then enhances them by evoking melancholy emotions or touching images of daily life. Germans, Hegel complains, are especially fond of these kinds of sketches and the outpouring of sentimentality they provoke. Such emotional indulgence, he concludes, "is the general highway which anyone can travel" (*Ä:I*, 544/425).[23]

A deeper relation between form and content can, however, be discerned in the ancient Greek epigram. Epigrams originated as terse poetic reflections inscribed on tombstones or monuments, sometimes commenting on great human themes such as love and death through descriptions of a particular individual. They may, Hegel admits, seem to involve a topic too obviously connected to an image and so to replicate the inadequacies of conscious symbolism. But at least some epigrams manage to give us "the thing itself in a double way": the "external existent" and its meaning are "pressed together . . . with the most salient and most apposite touches" (*Ä:I*, 545/425). What seems to strike Hegel about these epigrams is that the author so closely binds the object to the meaning that the connection ceases to be contingent or to showcase only the author's wit.

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[23] Beiser points out that Lessing instead objected to descriptive poetry on the grounds that it was "mere imitation of appearances," which would then suggest that Plato was right to dismiss its worth (Beiser 2009, 281).

But this trend among Greek authors was fleeting. Later epigrams became "sketchy, ingenious, witty, agreeable, and touching" (*Ä:I*, 545/425), setting forth "not so much the topic itself as the author's clever relations to it" (*Ä:I*, 545/426). Once the focus is again on the author, the connection between meaning and form again becomes accidental and the work ceases to be art. In this context, Hegel again goes out of his way to criticize his contemporaries. Tieck's novels, he says, simply set forth a topic, often another work of art: some little story is then "tacked on" to it, presumably to keep the reader's interest. Such arbitrary pairings can only, Hegel thinks, produce defective works of art.

At this point in art's developmental narrative, then, the form and content that art is meant to hold together "have become perfectly independent, and the unity holding them together is only the invisible subjective activity that is making the comparison" (*Ä:I*, 18/431). This is how symbolic art ends. Its decline began already when, with works of art such as the myth of Osiris or the sphinx, it laid the groundwork for classical art's portrayal of the human as the divine. After this climax, it has dissolved into lesser works of art in which the connection between form and content is increasingly distant or arbitrary. Hegel's contemporary examples suggest that art of any period can fail in this way, namely if the artist neglects a meaningful reunification of form and content, instead pairing the two arbitrarily.

Despite these endings, humans have progressed through symbolic art toward a more adequate understanding of the Idea. At its inception, both nature and the divine were treated as given, and humans' attempts to understand the divine were focused on deciphering nature's secrets. By the end, humans are creating meaning through allegories and finding pleasure in describing their own daily lives. But when such a work fails to make the familiar strange—when it simply depicts the everyday without enabling us to sense truth—or when it fails to show an interpenetration of form and content and instead is a product of an artist's explicit intention, it fails to be art.

If art is to continue, "external appearance and its meaning . . . must not, as was the case just now, be altogether separated from one another; neither should there remain as their unification a linkage which is symbolical or sublime and comparative" (*Ä:I*, 545/426). Instead,

> [t]he genuine representation is to be sought, therefore, only where the thing itself through and in its external appearance affords the interpretation of its spiritual content, since the spiritual unfolds itself completely in its reality, and the corporeal and external is therefore nothing but the adequate explication of the spiritual and the inward itself. (*Ä:I*, 545/426)

Art must find a sensuous manifestation that unifies the spiritual and physical completely, where the divine is not hinted at but fully expressed. This can only happen, Hegel thinks, when art takes the idealized human form as its primary subject matter. The civilization that accomplishes the transition to this perfect form is ancient Greece.

3

Classical Art

The Embodied Divine

The foundation of the classical worldview, then, is the divine in human form. The long search for the correct shape in which to portray the spiritual is over. But the fact that the human body can portray the divine means the conception of the divine has changed as well. It is no longer simply natural, as it was in unconscious symbolism, nor is it fundamentally nonnatural, as it was in sublime art. It is, instead, the interpenetration of natural and spiritual. For this reason, the classical worldview can be completely expressed in a natural, physical body. Classical art therefore achieves beauty as the complete sensuous appearance of the Idea. It expresses the true that is the whole by perfectly uniting unity and division and by exhibiting full self-determination and so a kind of freedom. Also for this reason, the classical worldview is inadequate. Human spirituality, in the end, cannot be expressed completely in the physical. It includes a reflection and subjectivity impossible to express in art. This reflectiveness, Hegel thinks, was absent in very early Greek civilization: a period in which humans existed in complete harmony with divine laws rather than as assessing and critiquing those laws. Once this side of human spirituality becomes better developed, classical art will be unable to express it and will decline through comedy to a divisive end in satire. The classical world is also the scene of art's most significant ending, namely the supplanting of a poetic religion by a historical religion. Greek religion was "the religion of art itself"; once that religion ends, humans' relationship to art will never be the same (*Ä:II*, 16/438).

In his discussion of the classical as the second particular art form, Hegel positions himself within another spirited discussion, this time regarding the role and value of ancient Greek art in the modern world.

Scholars and artists had deliberated this question for generations, and neoclassicism already had an extensive history in eighteenth-century France and Italy. But Winckelmann's 1755 *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* brought the Greek world to the attention of German intellectuals in an epoch-defining way.[1] His vivid account of Greek life inspired a generation's longing for the harmony and grace he found there. His analyses of specific classical sculptures, for instance the Belvedere Apollo or the Belvedere Torso, exposed his readers to new wonders of ancient artistic accomplishment.[2] He also helped shift his public's understanding of art and its relation to history, stressing art's emergence from culture over its aspiring to eternal ideals of perfection.[3] Winckelmann not only argued for the beauty of Greek art as an aesthetic ideal but suggested that ancient Greek climate, ethics, and government had produced an environment that fostered a kind of human perfection. He also presented the study of ancient Greece as a way to resist repressive politics and encourage moral improvement through cultivating simplicity, restraint, and composure as opposed to the aesthetic excesses of the baroque or the political tyranny of the French Revolution.[4]

Winckelmann's influence among German intellectuals was vast. Goethe and Herder were both early disciples, and both contributed to Winckelmann's reputation by writing about his work for a larger audience.[5] When Schiller laments modern alienation in comparison to ancient Greek harmony in his *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, Winckelmann's influence is obvious. It is also clear in William von Humboldt's assertion that Germans were called to heal the alienation of modern life through reviving Greek culture.[6] The effect of Wincklemann's assessment of art's development in terms of civilizational birth, growth, and decline is evident in the work of many theorists, including Hegel's.[7] Romantic writers such as the Schlegels converted early to this ardent Hellenism, even if they later became yet more intrigued, as we have seen, by the Orient.[8] Hegel's own earliest writings—for instance a poem written for his friend Hölderlin—also reflect a longing for the perfection and harmony of ancient Greece instead of the fragmented alienation of modern life no doubt inspired in part by Winckelmann.[9]

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[1] Winckelmann (1960); for discussion, see Beiser (2009), 172 and Geary (2014), 12ff.

[2] See, for instance, his 1759 "Erinnerung über die Betrachtung der Werke der Kunst" and "Beschreibung des Torso im Belvedere zu Rom," collected in Winckelmann (1960), 29–61 and 143–147. Both are translated in Winckelmann (2013).

[3] Baur (1997), 94; see also Beiser (2009), 157.

[4] Beiser (2009), 163, 171.

[5] See Goethe's *Winckelmann and His Century.* Herder's commentaries on Winckelmann are scattered throughout his works: see Harloe (2013), Chapter 7.

[6] Saure (2013), 215.

Based on these and other sources, including his lectures on aesthetics, it is common in the literature to accuse Hegel of neoclassicism: of claiming, as Peters puts it, that "classical Greek art is exemplary due to its unsurpassed beauty and thus provides a standard that should be emulated by all works of art."[10] As we saw in the previous chapter, the very designation classical, as well as its opposition to the modern or romantic, is a historical invention, and Hegel's iteration of it should be seen as part of an ongoing conversation about the value of modernity. Hegel's place in these debates is complex. He shares many of his contemporaries' conviction that Greek life was simpler and nobler. There is no doubt that Hegel thought the Greeks achieved beauty in a surpassingly perfect way. But he resists nostalgic longing to return to such a state or to view the romantic era, as Goethe reductively put it, as "sick" as opposed to the classical world's health.[11] This has to do with Hegel's claim, fundamental to his idealism, that truth is achieved only with the unity of unity and division. The Greek ideal, in Hegel's view, did not adequately include division and so was unable to articulate this truth. As he puts it in the *Encyclopedia*: "In religions where the Idea has not yet been revealed and known in its free character . . . still this art is defective; its form is defective because its subject-matter and theme is so" (*EPG*, §562). There is, in short, very little in Greek art that modern humans can or should emulate. If, as Peters puts it, Hegel is a neoclassicist, "his is a peculiar version of neoclassicism indeed."[12] Or, as Donougho suggests, Hegel should not be seen as a classicist except, perhaps, ironically.[13] Part of the aim of this chapter is to illustrate ways in which that is the case.

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[7] Beiser (2009), 161.

[8] For more on this trajectory, see Geary (2014), 15–16.

[9] See *Frühe Schriften*, 230–233 and Baur (1997), 97.

[10] Peters (2015), 2.

[11] Bubner (2003), 250.

[12] Peters (2015), 2.

1. Degraded Animals, Battling Gods: The Emergence of Classical Art

The laborious emergence of the human as art's content from its early instances in Egyptian art to its full expression in Greek sculpture begins in the early classical era's degradation of the animal.[14] Whereas animals were deified in symbolic religions, the Greeks sacrifice them: the human shows that he "wishes to renounce the object consecrated to his gods and cancel the use of it by himself" (*Ä:II*, 37/446). In symbolic art, human forms were dignified by mixing with animal forms in the case of the sphinx or Anubis. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, by contrast, transgressing humans are punished by being transformed into animals (*Ä:II*, 46/453). Gods are depicted in increasingly realistic human form rather than spatially distorted approximations or fantastical hybrids. In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel writes that beautiful (by which he here means Greek) art "has purified the spirit from its thralldom" to "hideous idols" and "wonder-working talismans" (*EPG*, §562). That purification has, here, already begun.

This disparaging of the natural continues as new gods gradually replace the old. Old gods are associated with "universal powers of nature" (chaos, time) or natural entities such as the earth and stars *(Ä:II*, 53/459). Newer deities such as Prometheus master the elements; gods such as Nemesis, Dike, and the Furies begin to leave the natural behind, bordering instead on "what is inherently ideal, universal, and spiritual" (*Ä:II*, 57/462). When the gods transform into beings corresponding to "property rights, laws, constitution, [and] political life," the emergence of the new gods is finally achieved (*Ä:II*, 62/466). The old gods are overthrown, and the spiritual realm is ascendant.

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[13] Donougho (2001), 5. The extent to which Winckelmann himself thought Greek art could be imitated is not straightforward; see Baur (1997).

[14] Compare A20, 102–103; H23, 147–148; K26, 218–219; and Hm28, 61.

But even these spiritual gods retain their natural basis; nature "enjoys an enduring veneration since, in conformity with the spiritual individuality of the classical ideal, it reverberates in [the new gods]" (*Ä:II*, 69/471). They are not just allegories of nature: Helios is not the god *of* the sun but "the sun as god" (*Ä:II*, 69/472). This "echo of the powers of nature" often shapes the individuality of the gods themselves. So while Poseidon controls the seas, he is also the founder of cities "because the sea is the element for shipping, trade, and the bond between men" (*Ä:II*, 71/473). In short, "in the new gods the universal elements of nature are disparaged but yet retained," incorporated into "the higher independence of spiritual individuality permeated by and permeating nature" (*Ä:II*, 70/475).

2. Embodied Beauty and the Culmination of Classical Art

The transition to classical art proper occurs when, instead of taking natural or divine powers and giving them human form, artists' content is drawn "from the human spirit and human existence, and therefore is the human breast's very own" (*Ä:II*, 78/479). So natural occurrences like storms, instead of signaling inscrutable divine wrath, are explained in human terms: as, for instance, a divine mother, Thetis, mourning for her dead son Achilles. This further reorientation toward the human means that, unlike in the sublime, the spiritual is not expelled from nature. Instead, it is shown in a natural form that is no longer distorted by its spiritual content but perfectly harmonized with it. That form is the human body.[15]

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[15] Peters suggests that beauty's fullest expression in Hegel's system is the human body and that this makes beauty itself a flawed ideal that undermines itself with the subsequent development of subjectivity. This seems right to me, especially since, as we will see, the emergence of subjectivity is crucial to Hegel's description of classical art's end. Instead of focusing on the human body, however, my argument will focus on how subjectivity undermines classical art through satire and comedy.

Artists' turn to human concerns has several revolutionary consequences. First: when artists' content is drawn from human experience, humans are brought to reflect on themselves and to view their own activities as spiritual. When this happens, spirit "intimates itself" and "makes itself into an object to itself"—a key step toward the self-understanding that characterizes the true that is the whole (*Ä:II*, 13/427). Second: classical artists achieve a new kind of freedom by transforming inherited religious narratives into a mythology framed by human concerns. Their works of art, therefore, themselves exhibit the transformation of the given into the made that characterizes so much of Hegel's philosophy and indeed his description of freedom. The resulting myths are neither accepted as given nor subjective and arbitrary but show the artist's creative participation in the structure of ancient Greek reality. These artists offer a paradigmatic case of the sensuous appearance of the Idea that art can produce and of the connection between art and creation. Drawing again on the etymological connection between poetry and "to make," Hegel says that Greek artists are the "*makers*, fashioners of this material and content into a shape freely self-dependent" and are therefore "genuinely creative poets" (*Ä:II*, 78/479). Finally, this ability to create a religious reality propelled artists to preeminent status within in Greek culture.[16] Homer and Hesiod, Hegel claims, "gave the Greeks their gods" (*Ä:I*, 506/394); all classical gods "belong to a tradition transformed by art" (*Ä:II*, 75/478).

Unlike their predecessors' embodiment of universal forces, these new, human-like gods are genuine individuals. Hegel means this in a technical sense: the gods are neither personifications of universal powers nor trapped "in the sphere of the particular, entangled with something other than and external to them" (*Ä:II*, 82/482). The gods instead hover "in the very middle between pure universality and equally abstract particularity," having "as their basis a specific natural power with which a specific ethical substance is fused" (*Ä:II*, 82/482). So Poseidon, again, is both god of the sea and founder of cities; Apollo is the god of both light and knowledge. Each god "bears in himself the determinate attribute of being a divine and therewith universal individual" and so is "partly a determinate character and partly all in all" (*Ä:II*, 82/482).

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[16] Hegel also takes on the worry that classical mythology is symbolic in that its stories stand for certain rational truths. But he maintains that this cannot be true since "the peoples at the time when they composed their myths lived in purely poetical conditions and so brought their inmost and deepest convictions before their minds not in the form of thought but in shapes devised by imagination without separating the universal abstract ideas from the concrete pictures" (*Ä:I*, 401/309). He thus objects to Schlegel's claim that all mythology is symbolic, which would require some awareness of the difference between form and content.

But beyond poetic descriptions of their actions, for instance Thetis's tempestuous mourning of Achilles's death, the classical gods' essential individuality suggests physical embodiment. It will not be enough for them to be depicted in poetry or painting. Their still-existent tie to nature and their perfect balance of universal and particular imply physicality: "by being beauty in classical art, the inherently determinate divine character appears not only spiritually but also externally in its bodily form, i.e. in a shape visible to the eye as well as to the spirit" (*Ä:II*, 83/482). The classical gods demand, in effect, to be sculpted.

And indeed, the classical gods' essential human form lends itself perfectly to sculpture. The human body, Hegel says, "in its whole demeanour evinces itself as the dwelling-place of spirit and indeed as the sole possible existence of spirit in nature" (*Ä:II*, 21/434).[17] In fact, "the external human form is alone capable of revealing the spiritual in a sensuous way"; the "human exterior is not only living and natural, as the animal is, but is the bodily presence which in itself mirrors the spirit" (*Ä:II*, 21/433). This "special correspondence of soul and body" is a major theme of Hegel's "Anthropology," where he details the fundamentally spiritual nature of the human body as evidenced in our gestures, expressions, postures, and physical manifestations of emotion (*EPG*, §411). At this moment of Greek culture, art begins to capture this interpenetration, showing "the human shape, deed, and action, through which the spiritual shines clearly in complete freedom, making the sensuous shape its own" (*Ä:II*, 75/476).

The classically sculpted human thus remains "equal to itself in its opposite"—the spirit is fully contained in the body, which perfectly expresses the spirit. It becomes, then, its “own self-determination”; it is “independent, displaying in its existence nothing but itself” (*Ä:II*, 18/431). Although Hegel will later qualify this claim, here he describes art as “absolutely true” and free (*Ä:II*, 18/431).

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[17] The clearest sourcing for these passages is in H23, 143–144.

Because of this thoroughgoing and free unity of form and content, classical art achieves a special level of beauty. In Part I, Hegel had described the beautiful as follows: in beauty, Hegel says,

> we find two things: first, a content, an aim, a meaning; and secondly the expression, appearance, and realization of this content. But, thirdly, both aspects are so penetrated by one another that the external, the particular, appears exclusively as a presentation of the inner. In the work of art, nothing is there except what has an essential relation to the content and is an expression of it. (*Ä:I*, 132/95)

The beautiful, we remember, Hegel defines as “the pure appearance of the Idea to sense” (*Ä:I*, 151/111). The Idea is the unity of unity and division: beauty appears when the unity of subjective and objective, human and nature can be sensibly perceived. Considering “objects as *beautiful*” cancels the “one-sidedness” of “subject and its object alike, and therefore their finitude and unfreedom” (*Ä:I*, 154/113). In beauty, “the external form and shape does not remain separate from the external material, nor is it stamped on it mechanically for some other purposes; it appears as the form immanent in the reality and corresponding with the nature of that reality, the form giving itself an outward shape” (*Ä:I*, 156/115). By achieving this freedom and beauty, classical Greek sculpture is, then, in one sense the pinnacle of art. Nothing is or can be, Hegel somewhat wistfully concludes, more beautiful (*Ä:II*, 128/517).

Like his narrowing of paradigmatic symbolic art to Egyptian art in general and the sphinx in particular, however, what Hegel considers the pinnacle of classical art is very limited.[18] In order to produce the perfectly enclosed, self-referential, free unity that achieves beauty, sculpture must present its figures as still and unperturbed. As we will see in more detail in Chapter 7, sculptures should embody the "untroubled bliss and untrammeled freedom" that characterizes the gods themselves (*Ä:II*, 82/482). They should be depicted as free "from every accident of external determinacy, from every dependence on nature, and from morbidity" (*Ä:II*, 83/483). No physical blemishes, strong emotions, or struggle should be evident. They should remain self-enclosed, embodying the freedom produced by their perfectly matched form and content. This suggests that Hegel found the classical ideal most perfectly expressed in the earlier, Phidian period that included the still majesty of the Zeus at Olympia or the Athena Parthenos (see Figure 3.1).[19] Some of the most famous ancient Greek sculptures, such as the Apollo Belvedere or Medici Venus, do not belong to classical art's peak (see Figure 3.2) (*Ä:II*, 431/766). Such sculptures, Hegel instead claims, are from the "transition from the lofty ideal to charm" (*Ä:II*, 251/618).

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[18] See Houlgate (2007a), 58.

When perfect beauty is achieved, we see "the spirit neither escaping the body nor emergent from it" but rather "one solid whole out of which the inwardness of the spirit quietly peeps solely in the wonderful certainty of itself" (*Ä:II*, 85/484). Unlike symbolic art's separation of the meaning from its physical expression, in classical art spirit is not "an inwardness foreign to the external shape, so that the material aspect neither has in itself, nor hints at, some other meaning" (*Ä:II*, 21/434). Spirituality does not "tower over" the natural; neither does the natural overcome the spiritual. There is, then, nothing symbolical about the classical Greek statue. It does not gesture beyond itself; each instead "expresses and means itself alone" (*Ä:II*, 18/431). When it achieves this self-sufficiency, "sculpture is above all adapted to represent the classical Ideal in its simple unity with itself" (*Ä:II*, 87/486). It is "beauty as such" (K26, 244).

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[19] In Part I's discussion of the situation, Hegel acknowledges that early Greek sculptors were capable of evoking activities that do not "appear simply as the beginning of a deed out of which further complications and oppositions would have to arise"; possible examples are the Apollo Belvedere and Aphrodite in Cnidos (*Ä:I*, 264/202). This confirms that these figures represent a transition from the complete stillness of, for instance, the Athena Parthenos to the more straightforward evocation of activity in later sculpture. For discussion, see Houlgate (2007a), 73–75.

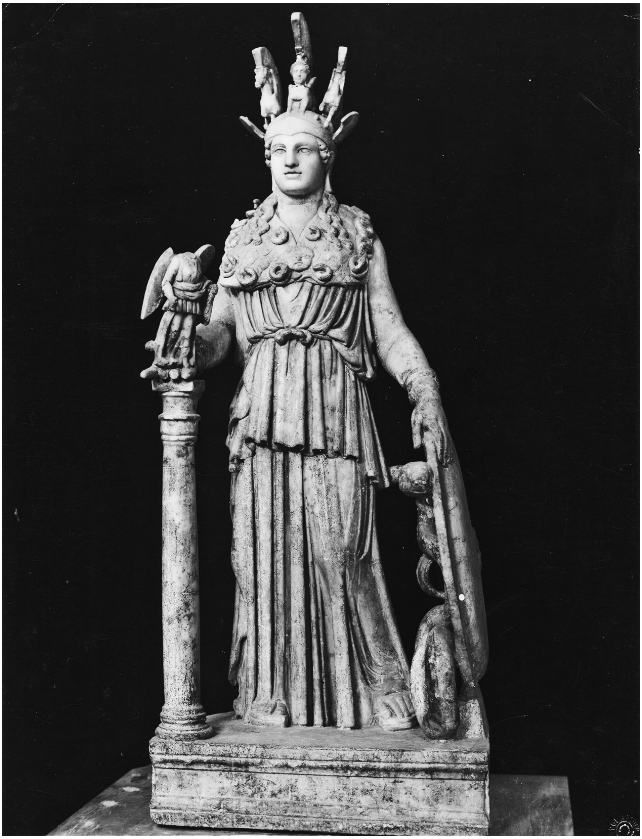

Figure 3.1 Athena Parthenos. Roman marble copy (1st century BCE) after the gold and ivory statue by Phidias in the Parthenon (c. 447–439 BCE).

Hegel associated symbolic art with political despotism and Judaism's sublime with the beginning of a consistent, law-governed political society. Classical art's symbiotic development with its political environment is if anything more pronounced. Echoing several of Winckelmann's claims, Hegel asserts that individuals living in ancient Greece mirrored the unity of classical sculptures by existing "in the happy milieu of both self-conscious subjective freedom and the

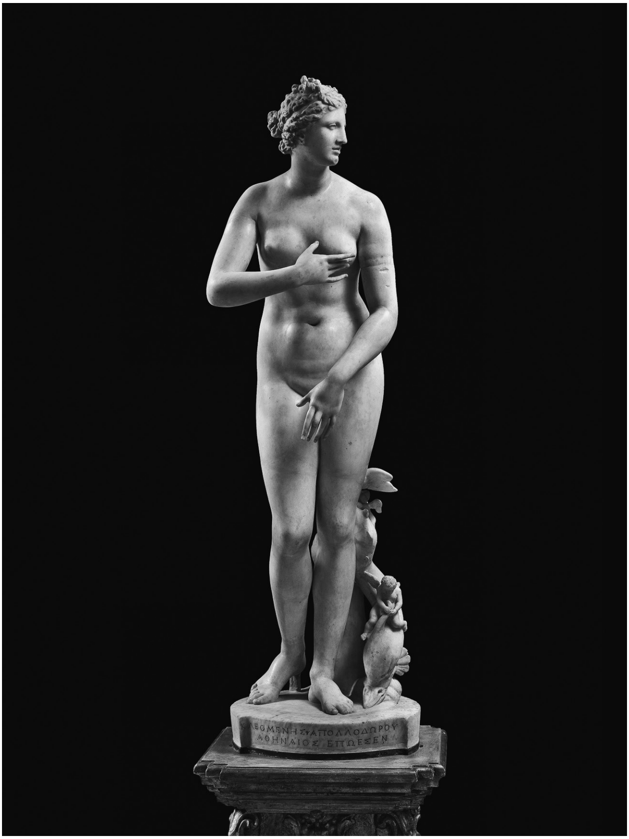

Figure 3.2 The Medici Venus. 1st century BCE. Inscription on base: Kleomenes, son of Apollodoros of Athens.

ethical substance"; they did not think of the aims of the political life around them as separable from their own aims (*Ä:II*, 25/436). The ancient Greeks lived, in other words, in cheerful, free harmony with their ethical order, untroubled by a distinction between subjective desire and objective law. Just as there is no separation between form and content in classical art, there is no separation between individuals and the ethical sphere in the classical world. The result is a self-contained, self-sufficient embodiment of spirit that is itself beautiful.

Classical gods' essential individuality has several consequences for the content of Greek religion. They cannot, for instance, be depicted as one universal god, meaning that the "Godhead necessarily becomes a *plurality* of shapes" and Greek religion is necessarily polytheistic. They are not systematically arranged and do not adhere to a strict hierarchy. Zeus is the supreme god, but "his power does not absorb the power" of the other gods, whose characteristics, origins, and special invulnerabilities Hegel goes on to describe (*Ä:II*, 90/488–489). Greek religion maintains throughout an "affirmative moral basis" in which "the subjective inner life of man is always presented in solid identity with the genuine objectivity of spirit, i.e. with the essential content of the moral and the true" (*Ä:II*, 105/499). Individuals' harmony with their ethical life, in other words, means there is none of the "abstract caprice" or "abstract universal" that wreaks havoc in modern ethical life. Even when humans or gods transgress, their actions are represented as justified; Greek religion is thus generally free of evil, wickedness, or senseless horror (*Ä:II*, 105/500). The suffering in Greek tragedies, Hegel will later argue, is brought about not by evil but by the collision of equally justified substantial interests. The protagonists' destruction restores the ethical order briefly threatened by this clash. No matter the drama's gruesome endings, Greek audiences therefore left the theater, just as Schiller suggested, with relieved hearts.

3. Subjectivity and the Dissolution of Classical Art

Despite its perfect beauty and harmony, Hegel is very clear that "the content of the classical beauty of art is of course still defective [*mangelhaft*], like the religion of art itself" (*Ä:II*, 23/435). Classical sculpture does not point beyond itself; the spiritual is completely embodied and does not "tower over" the physical. But exactly this characteristic, which makes classical beauty possible, signals the defectiveness of its content. In order to be complete and express the true that is the whole, spirit has to *know* itself as spirit, and this requires a perspective beyond the physical that classical art cannot express.

Even at its height—when "the whole shape is vitally ensouled, identical with spiritual being" (*Ä:II*, 85/484)—classical sculpture suggests this limitation. As beautiful and peaceful as these sculpted gods are, Hegel describes them in several passages as mournful. The very fact that their peacefulness makes them appear "raised above their own corporeality" indicates a "divergence between their blessed loftiness, which is a spiritual inwardness, and their beauty, which is external and corporeal" (*Ä:II*, 84/483). This divergence is ultimately unstable, and the gods appear to know this: "The blessed gods," Hegel says, "mourn as it were over their blessedness or their bodily form" (*Ä:II*, 86/485).

Indeed, sculpture's all-too-human gods instigate the end of classical art: "the germ of their decline the classical gods have in themselves" (*Ä:II*, 107/502). The individuality at the heart of classical art resulted in polytheism: the more classical artists develop each god's particular characteristics, the more they are subjected to contingency and conflict. The gods "set themselves in motion with particular ends in view . . . they are drawn hither and thither in order now to help here, now to hinder or destroy there" (*Ä:II*, 108/502). Ultimately, the gods "cannot evade the fate of running into the external characteristics involved in human life" (*Ä:II*, 109/503).

Once artists depict the gods enmeshed in human pettiness and struggle, humans' attention ceases to be directed at the lofty, peaceful divine and is instead directed at themselves. Later sculpture's content is "not the substantial at all, the meaning of the gods and their universal element" but instead "the finite aspect, sensuous existence and the subjective inner life" (*Ä:II*, 107/501). Such sculpture "does not agitate a man or lift him above his particular character but lets him remain at peace in it and claims only *to please him*" (*Ä:II*, 106/501, italics mine). Not unlike symbolic art's later epigrams, Greek sculpture comes to have "individualization and its contingency" as its content and "the agreeable and the attractive" as its form (*Ä:II*, 106/500). "The seriousness of the gods becomes a gracefulness," Hegel says (*Ä:II*, 106/501), and this gracefulness "entice[s] us away from the universal." Humans' new emphasis on the graceful and the pleasant "damages religion as such" (*Ä:II*, 107/501).

When art stops attempting to lift us above our particularity and instead lets us "remain at peace" and tries only to please us, it ceases to articulate the Idea: it no longer shows the miracle of a human in divine form and just shows us ourselves. Art then goes from being beautiful—showing the interpenetration of divine and human—to being merely agreeable, attractive, and graceful. The fact that humans begin to find only themselves, and not the divine, in sculpture, means that it fails to achieve *the status of art*.

Just as the harmony at the pinnacle of Greek art was echoed in political harmony, classical art's further disintegration into subjective human concerns finds an equally fateful echo in political life. Humans' new consciousness of themselves allows a new self-interest to develop which is then followed by weakened loyalty to traditional laws and new kinds of corruption. The sophists, Hegel recounts in his lectures on history, began to insist that religious traditions be held up to individual humans' scrutiny, subjecting traditional norms to argumentative challenge and further disrupting the ethical order (*VGP:I*, 420–422/364–367). Socrates continued the sophists' quest insofar as he demanded "to be free not only in the state, as the substantial whole, not only in the accepted ethical and legal code, but in his own heart" (*Ä:II*, 118/510). Athenian society had no way to integrate such a perspective, precipitating Socrates's tragic clash with its laws and the beginning of the end of Athens' golden age.[20]

Whatever combination of reasons prompted this change, Socrates's insistence on subjecting Athenian laws to the critique of his own conscience evidenced a sense of subjectivity not previously experienced, Hegel thinks, in human development. Other developments in ancient Greek life, for instance tragedies, had begun to signal this change, but Socrates had made it impossible to ignore. Humans at this point, Hegel suggests, begin to think of themselves as independent interpreters of moral law and as having a deep inner sense that transcends their physical bodies. Hegel thinks that this new subjectivity is a vital step forward. It promises to supply the missing aspect of "inwardness knowing itself as infinite" that has, so far, been missing and that is necessary for the "true totality" to be achieved. Without this, "the Absolute does not truly appear as a spiritual subject" (*Ä:II*, 110/504). As beautiful as the classical ideal was, it did not require humans to come to a "self-knowing unity" with their world and so prevented the reflection necessary to completing the true that is the whole.

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[20] Developments in Greek politics also fostered the development of this spirituality. Among the influences Hegel cites are Solon, Anaxagoras, and Pericles: see *VGP:I*, 373ff., 324ff. Hegel associates this split between citizens' inner and outer sensibilities also with Athens' expansion. In its original form, it was possible for all citizens to be involved in all decisions within the polis. But increased size necessitated a division of labor which prevented citizens from participating fully in all parts of political life.

But the advent of this kind of reflectiveness prompts art's eclipse. It will be impossible to depict humans' understanding themselves as more than the sensuous without art—as itself sensuous—pointing beyond itself and thus no longer expressing the most complete sensuous unity of unity and division. As Hegel puts it,

> the defect [of classical art] is just art itself and the restrictedness of the sphere of art. This restrictedness lies in the fact that art in general takes as its subject-matter the spirit (i.e. the *universal*, infinite and concrete in its nature) in a *sensuously* concrete form, and classical art presents the complete unification of spiritual and sensuous existence. . . . But in this blending of the two, spirit is not in fact represented in its *true nature*. For spirit is the infinite subjectivity of the Idea, which as absolute inwardness cannot freely and truly shape itself outwardly. (*Ä:II*, 111/79)

Classical art's inadequacy—its inability to include an independent subjective viewpoint—makes it perfectly suited for sensuous expression and so allows it to achieve the highest form of art. But after the peak of classical art, the total interpenetration of subjective and objective that allowed it to achieve this pinnacle makes it incapable of depicting more developed subjectivity. Its attempts to incorporate subjectivity and spirit's emerging self-consciousness begin to cause its unraveling. This is one of the most important senses in which Hegel speaks of the end of art. After the development of subjectivity, humans will never be able to adopt a worldview that can be perfectly expressed sensuously again. Art consequently will never re-establish itself as the most adequate expression for the fundamental values on which a worldview is based.

4. Comedy, Satire, and the Prosaic Ends of Classical Art

Once human subjectivity becomes art's primary subject matter, we begin to transition, Hegel says, to another art form. The development of a critical attitude toward norms "begins to awaken thought's discontent with the reality which is given to it and which no longer corresponds with it" (*Ä:II*, 107/501). Hegel warns that this subjectivity is as yet undeveloped and so only defines itself "as afflicted with opposition to the real" (*Ä:II*, 122/513). In other words, subjectivity is now conscious of itself in a new way, but it is only conscious of itself as separate from the world.[21] Ultimately Hegel believes this one-sidedness must be surpassed. But for now, in contrast to the subject in unity with his political sphere, the subject becomes a "purely abstract, finite, unsatisfied subject" (*Ä:II*, 122/513). This rupture between subjective and substantial results in two new aesthetic categories: comedy as a final successful art form in the classical world and satire as its prosaic parallel.

Since it defines itself against tradition, subjectivity is first motivated to critique and destroy it. The result within art is satire, which "is enraged with or scoffs at the world which directly contradicts its abstract idea of virtue and truth" (*Ä:II*, 123/513). Satire abandons the agreeable and the pleasant: it is only "passionate indignation or keener wit and colder bitterness [set] against the reality confronting it" (*Ä:II*, 123/513). Agreeable sculpture is no longer art, Hegel claims, because it does not attempt to portray the unity of human and divine but only the human. Satire, by contrast, is no longer art because it seeks no unity at all.

But Hegel mentions a last moment at which ancient Greek art pulled back, briefly, from the satirical abyss and achieved a higher reconciliation in the so-called Old Comedy of Aristophanes. As befits an artist living through the emergence of subjectivity, Aristophanes "has the task of sketching this reality in the traits of its corruption which is opposed to the good and the true" (*Ä:II*, 119/511). But instead of resorting to satire, he "wills the good and envisages the fulfillment of his essential being . . . in the old gods, the old moral and legal life" (*Ä:II*, 119/511). As a result, he still finds resolution. Through Aristophanes's efforts,

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[21] This discussion is again reminiscent of Hegel's description of consciousness moving through inadequate self-conceptions in "Subjective Spirit": see *EPG*, §408Z.

> a new art-form appears in which the struggle between the opposites is not conducted by thoughts which leave the opposition intact; on the contrary, what is brought into the artistic portrayal is reality itself in the madness of its ruin, destroying itself within, whereby, precisely in this self-destruction of the right, the true can display itself on this mirror as a fixed and abiding power. (*Ä:II*, 119/511)

Aristophanes's comedies, Hegel thinks, manage to wrest a final reunification from the widening rupture between subjectivity and objectivity, between human and divine. In the face of classical art's collapse, he creates art. How?

In order to make sense of why Aristophanes's comedies achieve this reconciliation, a foray into Hegel's discussion of ancient comedy, found in the third part of Hegel's lectures and discussed at length in Chapter 11, is necessary.[22] The laughable in general, Hegel says, is a response to a kind of self-negation: we laugh when we see that "the realization of an end is at the same time the end's own destruction" (*Ä:III*, 527/1199).[23] Comedy in particular is characterized by a protagonist's equanimity in the face of self-negating aims. These aims might be self-negating because they are in tension with themselves, because characters use ridiculous means to pursue them, or because intricate plots at least temporarily thwart them. In addition, Hegel limits the designation comic to dramas exhibiting the subjective attitude that defines comedy. Comedy, in short, is cheerful: unlike satire's corrosive laughter, it implies "an infinite light-heartedness and confidence felt by someone raised altogether above his own inner contradiction and not bitter or miserable in it at all: this is the bliss and ease of a man who, being sure of himself, can bear the frustration of his aims" (*Ä:III*, 528/1200).

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[22] My comments here are extracted and revised from Moland (2016).

[23] See also Hegel's comments on laughter in *EPG*, §401. He seems here to build on the theory of laughter explicated by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*. Laughter, Kant says, is "an affect resulting from a sudden transformation of a heightened expectation into nothing" (Kant 1990, §54, translation at Kant 2000).

Thus far, Hegel has confirmed Winckelmann's impression of ancient Greeks as peaceful, harmonious, and self-sufficient: in short, to reference Nietzsche's critique, as Apollonian. But in comedy, we find the intrusion into this ideal of a spirit which, if not fully Dionysian, at least shows an awareness on Hegel's part of another side of ancient Greek life. One of Hegel's favorite examples of comic heroes, for instance, is Strepsiades, the main protagonist of Aristophanes's *Clouds*. Strepsiades's scheme—to evade his creditors by having Socrates train his son in sophistical argumentation—is ridiculous. On some level, he knows it: a fact made obvious by his lascivious digressions, scatological puns, and other disruptions of Socrates's (likewise ridiculous) lesson plans. The scheme backfires when his son, having learned from Socrates that the gods do not exist, renounces his filial duties, beating and insulting Strepsiades until he admits defeat. Throughout, Aristophanes's attitude toward his characters is not mocking but cheerful even as they wreak destruction on society's most cherished ideals. But the disruption is ultimately contained. The play ends with Strepsiades cheerfully revenging himself by setting fire to Socrates's Thinkery, negating his own attempted negation of the substantial order, reconciling himself again to the old order. His characters' concerns are also revealed to be substantial: despite the ridiculousness of their tactics, they challenge their audiences to consider serious questions regarding law and corruption. There is, then, no true Dionysian moment in Hegel's analysis of Greek life, only a minor intrusion that confirms the final order.

Satire leaves division intact and so risks no longer being art. By contrast, Aristophanes's negated negation confirms his creations as "genuine art." By achieving this unity, comedy achieves a strange, brief return to something like classical unity. Comedy's lighthearted destruction, Hegel even says, briefly restores "the smiling blessedness of the Olympian gods, their unimpaired equanimity which comes home in men and can put up with everything" (*Ä:III*, 554/1222).

But Old Comedy's brief return to unity ultimately succumbed to the same humanizing pressure as did sculpture.[24] The development of so-called New Comedy—the dramas of the Greek poet Menander and his Roman successors Plautus and Terence—is evidence of this shift.[25] New Comedy seldom depicts gods or substantial matters such as family, religion, or politics. Instead, it showcases intricate plots of domestic intrigue: slaves trick masters, children deceive fathers, lovers are thwarted then reunited through circumstances ever more ridiculously coincidental. As a result, protagonists' ends are no longer self-negating in the technical sense that they result in nothing and so evaporate, re-establishing a harmony with the divine. Since New Comedy does not aspire to depict humans reuniting with the divine, or even to make the familiar strange, it cannot fully satisfy art's mandate. Lacking even an aspiration to evoke this truth, drama begins to "laps[e] into prose" (*Ä:III*, 533/1204).

While New Comedy dissolves classical art from one direction, satire's divisiveness erodes it from the other. To the extent that it "clings discontentedly to the disharmony between its own subjectivity, with its abstract principles, and empirical reality," satire produces "neither true poetry nor true works of art" (*Ä:II*, 123/514).[26] Hegel phrases this concern again in terms of the prosaic as opposed to the poetic. Satire's obdurate opposition, Hegel says, "presents, in the place of the poetic reconciliation, a prosaic relation between the two sides; the result is that the classical art-form appears as superseded, since this relation leads to the downfall of the plastic gods and the beautiful world of men" (*Ä:II*, 120/512). Even when satire is "exquisite and cultivated," however, it is still not poetic (*Ä:II*, 124/515). Since it is just ill-humored and seeks no negation of its negation of the ethical order, satire cannot achieve "genuine poetic dissolution of the false and the disagreeable or a genuine reconciliation in the truth" (*Ä:II*, 126/516).

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[24] This shift within drama to the human had already begun in tragedy: the older tragedies of Aeschylus had been heavily symbolic, using poetic language and focusing on the activities of the gods. Euripides's later tragedies instead took up human concerns in language much closer to spoken Greek.

[25] M. S. Silk concludes that Aristophanes's plays *Cocalus, Ecclesiazusae*, and *Plutus* all tend in this direction already, making Aristophanes a key in the transition to New Comedy rather than its opponent. See Silk (2000).

[26] Compare A20, 114; H23, 165; K26, 245–246; and Hm28, 69.

Division is of course nothing new in art: symbolic art was characterized by a fundamental opposition between content and form or human and divine. But symbolic art knew only division; as it dissolves, classical art, by contrast, must grapple with the memory of lost unity. The resurfacing of division causes hostility, incompatibility, and enmity. This only enhances the power of satire, which then flourishes in the Roman Empire. Hegel praises Rome's introduction of equal citizenship (at least among some) and rule of law: an achievement that, he will later argue, is a precondition of Christianity's universalism. But Roman law's abstract essence means that it cannot reconcile the external and internal world for the individual. The culture that produced this law consequently cannot produce true art. The Roman world, Hegel then suggests, was prosaic from the start, unable to achieve the unification that art requires.

5. The Historical Transcendence of Art

In privileging humans' everyday concerns and petty struggles, Hegel's examples of classical art's dissolution—pleasant sculpture, New Comedy, and satire—move art toward the actual world. Classical art had already been weakened by its inability to portray subjectivity. Its movement toward the actual, historical world weakens it further, especially as religion, too, begins to shift from the mythological to the historical. Humans' "universal interest and end" has "now become present *in the world outside religion*, as something existent at the same time" (*Ä:II*, 117/509, italics mine). This radical shift is at the heart of the religion that flourishes after the Roman Empire's collapse, namely Christianity. Jesus is described as a historical human whose flesh and blood are essential to his role as the world's redeemer: "The Divine, God himself, has become flesh, was born, lived, suffered, died, and is risen." This, Hegel reminds us, "is material which art did not invent" (*Ä:II*, 111/505).

We have, so far, seen art end when it veers into imitation or moralizing, lapses into the pleasant or into division. We have also seen symbolic art end conceptually as it transitions into classical art. But with Christianity's assertion of Jesus as God made flesh and dwelling among us, art reaches its *historical end*. This, as I have already claimed, is the most profound of art's endings. Art will continue, and its ability to allow humans to encounter the Idea sensuously will also continue. In fact, as humans' consciousness of freedom progresses, the ways in which art expresses this freedom will better track truth. But precisely for this reason, art will never recover the same importance in human life. No matter how moving or perfectly executed art after the classical age is, Hegel writes, "we bow the knee no longer" (*Ä:II*, 142/103).

So what kind of neoclassicist was Hegel, if at all? There is very little in his lectures on aesthetics to suggest that Hegel thought modern humans could or should imitate classical Greek culture. Nor, contrary to the lyrical expressions of nostalgia evident among many of his peers, does Hegel suggest that this is unfortunate. The Greek world achieved an interpenetration of spirit and nature that, however beautiful, excluded a full understanding of subjectivity. Hegel's philosophical idealism requires a *conscious* unity of unity and division foreign to this sensibility. After the withdrawal of subjectivity from the world—a withdrawal already evident in Greek art—humans will have to struggle to achieve a new unity. But once that unity is achieved, it will be more complete than the simple unity of the Greek ideal. We should not, then, look to the Greeks for rejuvenation but seek a higher unity in our own divided world.

4

Romantic Art

The Human Divine

We have already seen Goethe's assertion that the distinction between classicism and romanticism began with his disagreement with Schiller and subsequently spread throughout the world. However true this self-attribution may be, certainly attempts to define the modern or romantic age preoccupied Hegel and his contemporaries no less than their efforts to assess their relation to the classical world. The terminology involved, unfortunately, is itself confusing. The designation "romantic" was widely employed in Hegel's lifetime to characterize the post-classical age. Early uses of "romantic" referred to romances—tales of chivalric love that blossomed in the Middle Ages, especially in Spain during Arabic rule. But the scope of the term was often extended to designate all Christian art of the Middle Ages and ultimately to any art since the Renaissance.[1] To complicate matters further, members of Hegel's generation such as Friedrich Schlegel, Tieck, and Novalis later came to be referred to as "the Romantics" to designate their emphasis on art as humans' highest access to truth, a position sometimes called "philosophical romanticism" in order to distinguish it from romanticism's other connotations.[2] It is crucial for an understanding of Hegel's system to realize that he has the post-classical sense, *not* this narrower group of his contemporaries, in mind in designating the third phase of particular art forms "romantic."[3]

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[1] See Behler (1976).

[2] Gardner (2018). Gardner helpfully classifies others within this category and Hegel's reaction to them. See also Eldridge (2001).

[3] Although they surely understood themselves as romantic in the former, post-classical sense, Beiser asserts that Schlegel, Novalis, and others in this group never referred to themselves as romantics in the narrower sense, and indeed, that this

So what kind of romantic was Hegel? We have already seen that while he acknowledges the harmony of the classical world, he sees its exclusion of subjectivity as a limitation. His discussion of romantic art is guided again by his overarching philosophical commitment to the true being the whole or the unity of unity and division, and by the conviction that the modern world must acknowledge and incorporate that division into a new harmony. Romantic art will be unable to achieve the unity of classical art and so be unable to reach art's pinnacle *as art*. But it will better achieve truth. The story of romantic art's development is the story of the closer approximation to this truth.

1. The Divine in History: Christianity

The divine, in Hegel's view, has always been art's primary subject matter. Symbolic art showed humans searching for an adequate representation of the divine; classical art perfectly depicted gods in human form. Romantic art is in one sense no different: "[i]n this final art-form too, as in the earlier ones, the divine is the absolute subject-matter of art" (*Ä:II*, 237/607). But Christianity's radical claim that God has appeared not just in human shape but incarnated in a human body revolutionizes humans' attitude toward the divine. A god with human needs and vulnerabilities sanctifies the human form, allowing humans to narrow the conceptual gap between themselves and the divine. Christianity's reorientation toward the human goes further. The incarnated god cannot remain limited in a particular physical form: he must "cast aside his individuality of body and spirit" by suffering and dying. Jesus's subsequent resurrection and return to inhabit his followers in the form of the Holy Spirit means that the divine can be found not just incarnated in human form but in every human.

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designation was not common until the 1820s (Beiser 2003, 7). See Ewton (1972), 99 for A. W. Schlegel's understanding of the term, which ranges from poems written in romance languages to works that are hybrids of ancient and modern styles as opposed to ancient civilizations' more unified aesthetics. For Friedrich Schlegel's understanding of the term, see Rush (2016), 62.

The consequences of this claim for humans' self-understanding are profound. "It is," Hegel writes, "on account of this moment of individuality that in Christ every individual has a vision of his own reconciliation with God" (*Ä:II*, 148/534).

Hegel apparently feels no compunction suggesting that this sacred vision is essentially a religious articulation of his own idealism. The true in Hegel's scheme, we remember, is a self-determining whole that only reaches full self-determination when it is divided and then returns to its original unity, this time *conscious of itself* as self-determining. Jesus's initial unity with God, followed by his incarnation, death, resurrection, and spiritual presence in his believers narrates this original unity, negation, and reunification. Christianity thus allows humans in the post-classical age to recognize "that the human spirit . . . is implicitly true spirit," and that every human "has the infinite vocation and importance of being one of God's purposes and being in unity with God" (*Ä:II*, 148/534). Through Christianity's narrative, this unity, which is "the original fact, the eternal basis of human and divine nature," is finally made comprehensible to humans, and Christianity achieves "the reconciliation of God with the world and *therefore with himself*, the unification of the spirit with its essence." At this stage, Hegel continues, "the Ideal seems at last to be completely at home" (*Ä:II*, 142/530, italics mine). It is also on account of the Christian story, Hegel thinks, that the claim that all humans are free and equal initially enters the world. It will take centuries and the Protestant Reformation for this claim to be more fully realized in humans' spiritual and political lives, but the foundation for this achievement has been laid.

However much they track the truth, these developments are not good news for art.[4] At the most basic level, we have already seen in the last chapter that Jesus's incarnation means that Christianity claims to be historical. Jesus is born to a human mother at a particular temporal and geographical point; religion leaves the realm of imagination and enters the world of time and space. Myths describing the gods' exploits and statues bringing their physical form to human consciousness were essential to the very existence of classical religion. Christianity, by contrast, needs no artistic depiction: "if it is a matter of the consciousness of *truth*, then the *beauty* of the appearance . . . is an accessory and rather indifferent" (*Ä:II*, 149/535). The "absolute Spirit, as spirit," Hegel reiterates, "is not an immediate topic for art" (*Ä:II*, 154/539).

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[4] We must be careful, then, to differentiate the layers of Hegel's analysis when determining what counts as progress in art. Kaminsky, for instance, says that "[a]ccording to Hegel, the synthetic stage is always more advanced than the two prior stages that are being synthesized" (Kaminsky 1962, 47). It may be true that romantic art is more advanced in terms of content, but, as we will see, it is less successful *as art*.

Secondly, the Christian's consciousness of the divine within turns her attention further inward. Humans' subjectivity—their emotions, goals, reasonings, and justifications—becomes their primary preoccupation and replaces traditionally divine concerns as the principal topic of art. "The true content of romantic art," Hegel says, "is absolute inwardness, and its corresponding form is spiritual subjectivity with its grasp of its independence and freedom" (*Ä:II*, 129/519). Again, this "spiritual subjectivity" is an expression of idealist truth for Hegel: the human is the divine, and human concerns are divine concerns, making our interiority an appropriate topic for art. Hegel also describes this development as the *subjective* becoming *substantial*. The substantial has until now been understood as synonymous with an external religious sphere and its application in domestic and political norms. But if the divine is the human, the subjective can be substantial. In coming closer to achieving this identity of subject and substance, art more nearly articulates idealist truth: it suggests the underlying dialectical unity of unity and division that Hegel calls the Idea.

But such subjectivity is by its nature impossible to capture fully in sensuous form. Sculpture can suggest emotion but is incapable of embodying an action's justification. Even poetry, whose potential for such expression is greater, struggles to articulate the fullness of the modern human heart. The tension that frames Hegel's entire discussion of particular art forms is clear: the romantic era has reached an *adequate* articulation of the Idea—an understanding of the unity of divine and human— *in religion*, but that adequacy means that art can only express the Idea *inadequately*. There is, again, some irony in the stage at which we have arrived. Christianity has correctly articulated Hegel's sense that the divine is the human. But precisely the adequacy of this worldview makes art unable to portray it.

Thirdly, Christianity's depiction of the divine in the human means that the divine has begun to "objectify itself, determine itself, and therefore proceed out of itself *into the secular content of subjective personality*" (*Ä:II*, 237/607, italics mine). To repeat: if humans contain the divine, human concerns become divine concerns. Romantic art tracks the transformation of the secular world into the divine: the "material of human existence, both outer and inner" thus enters into the sphere of art. The trajectory of romantic art is toward showing the human everyday, ultimately making humans art's new "holy of holies" (*Ä:II*, 195/573, 237/607). Romantic art trends toward the human, but the human *as* divine.

But this goal also threatens art's status. As I argued in Chapter 1, the contrast between the poetic and prosaic frames Hegel's discussion of art. The poetic, broadly understood, describes art that embodies the Idea, while the prosaic describes the failure of art to achieve that embodiment. By trending toward human concerns, art after Christianity tends away from the poetic and toward the prosaic. The fact that Hegel in both symbolic and classical art identifies the prosaic as one of the *dangers* threatening art highlights the challenge romantic art faces. The closer art gets to the human, the closer it comes to the prosaic and the more it risks ceasing to be art altogether. Put another way: the closer humans come to articulating the truth that the human is the divine, the harder it is for them to express that truth in art. One of Hegel's earliest suggestions regarding art, we remember, is that it should make the familiar strange; romantic art's move toward familiar human concerns intensifies the difficulty of achieving this strangeness. Although it comes closest to articulating Hegel's idealism and so can represent a kind of conceptual culmination, then, romantic art cannot be the culmination *of art*. Its most successful examples will involve artists managing to re-poeticize human concerns, but even these accomplishments will not be paradigmatic examples of art.

Hegel divides this period of art's reduced status into three stages: the "religious realm" of Christian painting, the "worldly realm" of chivalric poetry, and the "formal independence" of Shakespearean characters and Quixotic adventures. In Hegel's description of these stages, we find again a range of ways art can end. Like symbolic and classical art, romantic art follows a conceptual trajectory and has a conceptual end: it begins with early but incomplete instances, progresses toward a paradigmatic poetic example, and then declines toward the prosaic. At that point, having exhausted its conceptual possibilities, it ends. Also like its dialectical predecessors, romantic art provides ample evidence of prosaic endings: points at which particular artworks—paintings, dramas, novels—fail to express the Idea and so cease to be art. But woven throughout these endings are also examples of post-classical works that Hegel judges to be successful expressions of the Idea and so successful examples of art. Assessing how the romantic worldview, despite its endings, can continue to produce art is a primary goal of the next two chapters.

2. The Religious Realm: Christian Painting

Despite his claim that Christianity's articulation of truth upends art's role in human life, Hegel leaves a noticeable chronological gap between the birth of Christianity and his first systematic treatment of post-classical art. [5] This gap—reaching from the first to the fourteenth centuries AD—spans Christianity's emergence as a political power in the Roman Empire, the defeat of that empire, and the re-emergence of Christianity as a military power in the Crusades. We can, however, learn about Hegel's evaluation of these centuries and their effects on art from his lectures on world history. The Crusades, in Hegel's assessment, were a catastrophe generated by a perversion of Christianity's message. Jesus had proclaimed that his kingdom was not of this world; crusaders nevertheless sought "a *definite embodiment* of the Infinite in a more isolated outward object," locating for their pains only an "empty sepulchre" (*VPG*, 472/393). After this distortion provoked centuries of violence, the Crusades' failure ultimately reinforced Jesus's spiritual message. Christianity was finally "undeceived," prompting the realization that "man must look within himself for that *definite embodiment* of being which is of a divine nature" (*VPG*, 472/393).

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[5] In Part III's discussion of the individual arts, Hegel does mention Byzantine mosaics and painting (*A:III*, 80/847, 110/871) as well as gothic architecture (*A:III*, 29/807) (which will be a major topic of Chapter 6) and the paintings of Giotto and Fra Angelico (*A:III*, 119/878). None of these discussions, however, play a role in the conceptual development of romantic art.

Despite their barbarity and ultimate failure, the Crusades produced important spiritual movements. Hegel praises the "boundless magnanimity" of Muslims for inspiring Christian knights to sacrifice themselves "with almost suicidal bravery for a common interest" (*VPG*, 475/396, 476/397). Fraternal organizations promoting such behavior contributed to the develompent of science and theology. As a result, humans could finally direct their attention toward science and the arts (*VPG*, 488/408). Along with the "so-called revival of learning" and the voyages leading to the discovery of the New World, Hegel thus lists "the flourishing of the fine arts" as ushering in a new age (*VPG*, 491/411). The first stage of romantic art proper, namely the religious realm, can now begin.

Given that Christianity's fundamental insight, in Hegel's telling, regards God's human incarnation, it stands to reason that its earliest art should depict this mystery. Representations of the divine in human form dominated classical culture and so are, of course, nothing new. But Christianity's message dictates several new criteria. First, for reasons I detail in Chapter 8, Christianity's emphasis on the subjective means that initially, its subject matter is best expressed in painting (*Ä:III*, 22/801–802). Unlike classical sculptures, these paintings must depict an actual man and not an idealized god in human form. Artists seeking to strike this balance have a more difficult task than did classical artists whose goal was simply beauty and whose limited choices left them uniquely free to excel at their art. Romantic artists also confront the challenge of depicting the "suffering, torture, and agony" included in the story of Jesus's death (*Ä:II*, 152/537)—of incorporating, as Hegel also puts it, the "affirmatively unbeautiful" (K26, 250). Insofar as they do this successfully, it is because the depictions bring our attention not to the physical anguish but to "the depth of the inner life" and the "Spirit as sufferance and divine peace" (*Ä:II*, 153/538).

But there is one thing in particular that Christian art is called on to depict: a new kind of love made possible, Hegel thinks, by Jesus's incarnation.[6] The Greek god, Hegel reminds us, existed "in himself absolutely perfect in the blessedness of his isolation" (*Ä:II*, 146/533). By contrast, the Christian God "emerges from itself into a relation with something else which, however, is its own, and in which it finds itself again" (*Ä:II*, 146/533). "This life in self in another," Hegel continues, "is, as feeling, the spiritual depth of love" (*Ä:II*, 146/533). It "consists in giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self, yet in this surrender and oblivion having and possessing oneself alone" (*Ä:II*, 155/539–540). This kind of love is new, according to Hegel, because it is predicated on the idea that the divine is in each of us and that we must recognize this divinity in each other. For all their mutual passion, the Greeks had no sense of universal human freedom and so could not relate to each other as equally harboring a spark of divinity. Christian love, by contrast, is a small-scale example of the unity of unity and division that characterizes truth according to Hegel, and it is one of the ways that humans come to *feel* that truth. So while the paradigmatic beauty of the classical world can no longer be achieved, a new kind of beauty has emerged: "we may now describe love as the ideal of romantic art in its religious sphere," Hegel says: "It is *spiritual* beauty as such" (*Ä:II*, 156/540). [7]

Since the mutual recognition of divinity is spiritual rather than physical, this more adequate truth will be harder to depict in art. But more and less successful attempts exist. The most obvious are images portraying Jesus's love for all of mankind. But the very universality of this love limits artists' ability to express it adequately: Jesus's love for all of humanity is, by definition, so abstract that it resists particular sensuous articulation. Not even Memling and van Eyck, artists Hegel clearly admired, were able to depict this love successfully (*Ä:III*, 46/820).

More promising are depictions of Mary's love for her divine son. Such love retains a natural and subjective bond: although her child stands "high above her, nevertheless this higher being belongs to her and is the object in which she forgets and maintains herself" (*Ä:II*, 158/542).[8] It is the love of one mother but nevertheless signals a universal feeling "of the unity between the individual and God in the most original, real, and living way" (*Ä:II*, 158/542). Hegel himself was clearly moved by Raphael and other Italian masters of this genre, some of whose art, for instance the *Sistine Madonna*, he had seen in his travels (see Color Figure 1). "[W]hat sublimity and charm, what a human heart, though one wholly penetrated by the divine Spirit," he enthuses, "does not speak to us out of every line of these pictures!" (*Ä:III*, 21/800).

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[6] Love as an antidote to religious positivity had been a central concern in Hegel's earliest writings: see "Entwürfe über Religion und Liebe" and "Der Geist des Christentums" (*FS*, 239ff., 360ff).

[7] See also *Ä:II*, 146/533; K26, 252.

It seems, then, that such paintings are the height of spiritual beauty in the romantic world. But since romantic beauty is not the paradigmatic beauty of the classical world, even this accomplishment is undermined (*Ä:II*, 149/535). No matter how aptly portraits of Mary express the love at the heart of Christianity, romantic art always suggests an interiority that cannot be presented to the senses. While classical art showed the interpenetration of spirit and nature, romantic art must continue to show their *difference*. It must signal its own inadequacy, reminding its audience that the soul has reality "not in this real existence, but in itself" (*Ä:II*, 144/531). Romantic art must *point beyond itself*, an achievement visible in depictions of Mary's distant gaze and quiet reservation. As we will see in Chapter 8, it is precisely painting's ability to reduce three dimensions to two that allows for this pointing beyond itself to succeed.

Once art aims to go beyond maternal love to depicting the "spirit of the community," it takes up three further topics. The first is the sufferings of martyrs. Memling, for instance, manages to capture the peaceful countenance of martyrs through their physical torment and so points the viewer beyond the gory scene represented to the intense spirituality that resists representation (see Figure 4.1) (K26, 255). But like scenes of Jesus's crucifixion, such brutal images are "very hazardous material for art": "their distance from beauty is too great" (*Ä:II*, 162/545). The second is the portrayal of conversions, for

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[8] See Hegel's comparison of these Madonnas with Egyptian depictions of "Isis holding Horus on her knees" *(Ä:III*, 21/800).

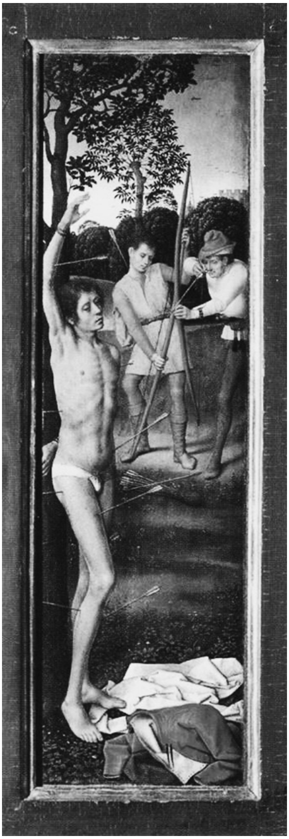

Figure 4.1 Hans Memling, *Triptych of the Resurrection*, c. 1490. Detail.

instance that of Mary Magdalene. Although the grief and regret that define such moments are deeply interior and therefore difficult to present in art, the fact that they provoke profound feeling makes them a successful topic for painting (*Ä:II*, 167/549). Lastly, art of the religious realm illustrates miracles and legends that often accompany the lives of saints. Hegel's skepticism is clear: "the real attestation of the divinity of Christ is the witness of one's own spirit—not miracles; for only spirit recognizes spirit" (VPG 394/326). Because of their dubious status, artistic portrayals of legends and miracles easily pass into the "abstruse, tasteless, senseless, and laughable" (*Ä:II*, 168/550).

Renaissance religious painting beautifully captures the beginnings of Christianity's penetration of human consciousness. But its emphasis throughout is inwardness as a withdrawal from the world: Jesus's death and resurrection, Mary's distant gaze, and the nature-defying miracles that characterize Christian narratives all deprecate the human everyday, showing it as something to be overcome rather than embraced. This shortcoming prompts the next artistic development:

> The heart which is only now perfected in its simple bliss has therefore to leave the heavenly kingdom of its substantive sphere, to look into itself, and attain a mundane content appropriate to the individual subject as such. Therefore the earlier *religious* inwardness now becomes one of a *worldly* kind. (*Ä:II*, 170/552–553)

3. The Worldly Realm: Chivalric Poetry

"Chivalry" (*Das Rittertum*) is Hotho's misleading label for the aesthetic category Hegel next considers. Chivalry is not an art form, and Hegel himself in 1823 calls this section "The Worldly Realm" (*Der weltliche Kreis*), making it a straightforward counterpart to section one, "The Religious Realm" (*Der religiöse Kreis*). The worldly realm describes the aesthetic phenomenon dialectically opposed to religious art's interiority: it shows what happens when a subject's primary orientation is his internal conviction but, instead of expressing that conviction by renouncing the world as martyrs do, he seeks to express his inwardness *in* the world. This difference prompts a shift in genre. Christian love was best expressed in painting, but chivalry will be best expressed by poetry (*Ä:II*, 172/554).

Hegel's examples are sparse, but it is fairly clear that these sections concern chivalric poetry of the early medieval period such as anonymous eleventh-century versions of *The Song of Roland*, twelfth-century accounts of El Cid, or Wolfram von Eschenbach's thirteenth-century

Parzival (*Ä:II*, 193/570–571).[9] Chivalric poetry's worldly orientation reflects the fact that humans are no longer content to obtain divine recognition in the life to come. Its heroes instead resolve to "secure complete reverence [for themselves] and others" in the temporal world (*Ä:II*, 171/553). This resolve generates three virtues—honor, love, and fidelity—that constitute the Chivalric Code. These virtues are notably secular: the knight fights for honor among his peers, pursues the love of a particular woman, and swears fealty to an earthly lord. Although its general backdrop, the Crusades, has religious origins, art here for the first time no longer primarily tracks religious themes. As a result, chivalric poetry can "create independently from its own resources and become as it were a freer beauty" (*Ä:II*, 172/554).[10]

This liberation from religious themes has several major consequences. Because the knight's primary preoccupation is with his own subjectivity, the particular situations in which that subjectivity is expressed are unimportant. Conflict in ancient Greek drama was circumscribed: the artist might find new articulations of traditional themes, but "all this is a cheerful activity in a house richly furnished . . . [T]he poet is only the magician who evokes them, collects and groups them" (*Ä:II*, 174/555). Since poets of the chivalric age are no longer bound by traditional religious narratives, the scope of possible plots widens substantially. In chivalric poetry, then, magical horns summon armies, knights execute superhuman feats, and mysterious spells are cast and broken—all in the name of allowing humans to pursue worldly goals of honor, love, or fidelity.

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[9] The fact that some of these poems were produced before the paintings Hegel discusses in "The Religious Realm" confirms, as I argued in the last chapter, that the order of argumentation in Hegel's discussion of particular art forms is more conceptual than chronological. Chivalric poetry had attracted renewed and intense interest during Hegel's lifetime, some of it a product of the search for a unified German identity. See, for instance, Germana (2009), 141–153. As an adult, Hegel himself never showed anything but impatience with the desire for national mythology, and indeed, German epics are not the focus of his discussion of chivalric poetry. See, as Knox points out, his sardonic comment about the popularity of the Middle Ages among his contemporaries at Hegel (1970), 193/571. See also Moland (2011a), 135–136.

[10] Hegel's ordering and pairing of these virtues varies across the lecture cycles: compare A20, 120–124; H23, 175–179; K26, 263–269; and Hm28, 74–76.

The subjectivity of chivalric poetry is also evident in the characters' justification of their actions. The things on which chivalrous honor depends—monarchs, territory, or possessions—are valuable only "because I put my personality into them and thereby make them a matter of honor." Objects' actual moral worth is irrelevant: someone "may well do the worst of things and still be a man of honor" (*Ä:II*, 178/559). Even virtues the chivalric outlook has in common with the classical world, like bravery, do not originate from the same source. Instead of coming from "natural courage which rests on healthy excellence and the force of the body and will which has not been weakened by civilization," bravery's new source is "the inwardness of the spirit" (*Ä:II*, 175/556).

Romantic art's goal is to express the truth that the human is the divine; chivalric poetry progresses toward that goal by articulating secular virtues and so turning toward human concerns. The subjective is closer to the substantial: human convictions are depicted in chivalric poetry as having normative force approaching the power ascribed in the classical world only to the gods. But this poetry remains limited by its fantastical plots and lack of an ethical structure (*Ä:II*, 194/572). The contingent, unsubstantiated nature of the chivalric agent's goals means that the characters themselves seem hollow and foreign, their desires mysterious. This inadequacy is still to be corrected in the development of dramatic characters.

4. Formal Subjectivity: Character and Adventure from Shakespeare to Cervantes

Religious art captured Christianity's new interiority in portrayals of sacred stories; chivalric poetry explored that interiority in the form of secular virtues, freeing itself in the process from religious content. The next stage involves further development of chivalry's worldly orientation as art stands on its own two feet, no longer needing religious themes, not even the backdrop of the Crusades (*Ä:II*, 195/573).[11]

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[11] In his 1842 edited edition, Hotho entitles this section "Formal Independence of Individual Characteristics." "Formal Subjectivity," which I find much clearer, is

Art is, in a sense, for the first time uniquely art, valued on its own terms: no longer formative of or subservient to religion, but art for its own sake. Hegel continues: "In his present world man wants to see the present itself as it is—even at the cost of sacrificing beauty and ideality of content and appearance—as a live presence recreated by art, *as his own human and spiritual work* (*Ä:II*, 196/574, italics mine).

Hegel finds this impulse to see the world as humans' own work most powerfully embodied in the writings of Shakespeare and Cervantes.[12] His analysis breaks down into two stages, which he designates "Character" and "Adventure," respectively. Together they represent the fullest development of subjectivity in art: the first time as tragedy, the second time as comedy.

Hegel's choice of Shakespeare and Cervantes as paradigmatically romantic thinkers reflects two major literary trends of the time. Despite early rejection, for instance by Gottsched, for his failure to follow the rules of classical art, Shakespeare had, by Hegel's lifetime, assumed titanic stature in the German-speaking world. This was thanks to critical work by Lessing, Herder, and A. W. Schlegel, the last of whose translations introduced Shakespeare to a wider German audience.[13] *Hamlet*, in particular, served for thinkers such as Lessing and Voltaire as a battleground for defining modern drama.[14] But by the early nineteenth cenutry, Friedrich Schlegel could write that "Shakespeare's universality is like the center of romantic art."[15] Such interpretations made it clear that imitation of the Greeks would no longer be the standard by which modern drama would be judged. Romantic art

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Hegel's title from the 1823 lectures as also recounted by Hotho (H23, 180). The corresponding section in the 1826 lectures is entitled "Das Freiwerden des Stoffes, der natürlichen Unmittelbarkeit," which, as we will see, refers to the arbitrary nature of events precipitated by the intense focus on subjectivity (K26, vii).

[12] Hegel's own engagement with Shakespeare began very early: see Kottman (2018), 265.

[13] Gjesdal describes the efforts made to "tame" Shakespeare's work: "to rein it in through Alexandrine translations, creative adaptations, and an unabashedly ideological editing of characters and lines" (Gjesdal 2018, 247). She makes a convincing case that in these years, German aesthetics becomes, in an important way, "Shakespearean" both in content and methodology (ibid., 248). For a fascinating account of Herder's evolution on the evaluation of Shakespeare, see Gjesdal (2004).

[14] Gjesdal (2018), 254–255.

[15] Schlegel (1984), fragment 121. See Gjesdal (2018), 264.

would instead be a hybrid, reflective of the critical attitude and radical self-interpretation found in many of Shakespeare's dramas but especially *Hamlet*.

Cervantes, too, had been a fixture in evolving ideas about modern literature. Schmidt reports that the Schlegel brothers, Tieck, and Novalis were "steeped" in *Don Quixote* in their Jena years, an immersion that resulted in Tieck's 1799 translation of the novel.[16] For Friedrich Schlegel, Cervantes had managed to combine the "objective order of the epic" with the "chaos of modern reality": along with Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Dante, Cervantes was included in Schlegel's quartet of authors responsible for the origins of Romantic literature.[17] Schlegel particularly praised Cervantes's synthesis of foolishness and madness and his ability to assimilate entire genres while also undermining them.

Hegel's analysis of Shakespeare and Cervantes builds on these discussions by focusing on the radical subjectivity their characters exhibit. Literature in this era, on his view, becomes an exploration of modern subjectivity and an assessment of its attempts to assert itself in an increasingly prosaic world.

A. Character

Like religious art and chivalric poetry, the new stage of art Hegel calls "Character" will showcase subjective interiority (*Ä:II*, 198/576). Also like chivalric tales, artistic depictions of character will be best expressed in poetry, the genre that allows the subject to explore and explain her motivations, thereby—as we will explore further in Chapter 11—maximizing the audience's understanding of her subjectivity. But subjectivity here is even more pronounced than it was in chivalry. While the Chivalric Code provided a backdrop of shared normativity, here "subjectivity has advanced to the point of having spiritual independence as the essential thing for it" (*Ä:II*, 142/528). This subjectivity is best expressed by fully developed, rich characters in dramas whose force of personality holds audiences captive.

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[16] Schmidt (2011), 50–51.

[17] See *Fragmente zur Poesie und Literatur II* (Schlegel 1958), 16:311; see also Schmidt 2011, 68). Schmidt also describes Friedrich Schlegel's fundamental role in shaping *Don Quixote*'s reception in Germany: see ibid., 47.

Hegel gives two tiers of examples. In the first, tragic heroes such as Macbeth and Othello are defined by one aim that they pursue with reckless single-mindedness. Such a character does not base his intentions "on something higher" but instead "rests on himself and in this firmness either realizes himself or perishes" (*Ä:II*, 200/577).[18] Unlike the figures in ancient Greek drama, these characters are not defined by *substantial* roles within the family or the state. What they take as substantial *is* their own subjectivity, not an external law or divine command. The moral contingency that pervaded chivalric honor and fidelity is thus also intensified here. Having overcome initial hesitations, Macbeth for instance "storms away through every atrocity": "Not respect for the majesty of his monarch, not the frenzy of his wife, not the defection of his vassals, not his impending destruction, nothing, neither divine nor human law, makes him falter or draw back" (*Ä:II*, 200–201/578). Not surprisingly, this disregard for the world often ends in disaster. Macbeth and Othello perish, their subjective aims crushed by the world's opposition.

Hegel's second group of examples depicts characters whose subjectivity is initially undeveloped and repressed. While characters like Macbeth exhibit their subjectivity through general heedlessness, characters in this second category, such as Shakespeare's Juliet, suggest a naïveté that hides the potential for explosive action. This puts the character at significant risk: it is either "fortunate, or else, lacking support, perishes" (*Ä:II*, 205/581). Once Juliet fixates on her love for Romeo, she shows herself capable of extreme action, including betrayal of her family and, ultimately, suicide. Thekla, the heroine of Schiller's *Wallenstein* trilogy, similarly acts "in the naïveté of the one interest which alone engrosses her soul," namely her love for Max. When that love is thwarted, the results are also tragic.[19]

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[18] This single-mindedness is apparently why Hegel calls such a character "formal": it is "restricted and therefore abstract" since it is limited to the character's subjectivity; it is "accidental" since it does not rest on "something substantial" but only on the subject's independence (ÄII, 199–200/576). Julia Peters has recently argued for a kind of beauty embodied by Shakespeare's characters: see Peters (2015), 93ff.

The artistic expression of repressed subjectivity is not limited, however, to tragedies or even to dramas. Another successful example, Hegel somewhat incongruously argues, can be found in German folksongs (*Ä:II*, 207/582). Goethe's *König in Thule* is an example of "laying open the whole fidelity and infinity of the heart in simple, apparently external, and indifferent traits" (*Ä:II*, 207/583). Like Juliet's actions, such folksongs show "how strongly the heart is gripped too by some one interest, yet can only bring itself to fragmentary expressions and reveal in them its depth of soul" (*Ä:II*, 206/582). Achieving such an aesthetic expression of inner depth is supremely difficult, Hegel reports: artists who achieve it "provide proof of an originally poetic spirit" (*Ä:II*, 207/583).

Hegel seems to think of these kinds of expressions as a necessary escape-valve for the deep subjectivity that can otherwise overwhelm the subject (*Ä:II*, 207/583). Hamlet is Hegel's example here. Unlike Macbeth, Hamlet represents "the inactivity of a beautiful inner soul which cannot make itself actual or engage in the relationships of his present world" and instead "comes to no firm decision but lets himself be led by external circumstances" (*Ä:II*, 208/584). So Hamlet does not plot his father's revenge but broods, breaking later into sudden anger that results in his killing of Polonius rather than Claudius.[20]

Shakespeare, as a post-classical artist, cannot rely on the clash of substantial roles within the family and the state to motivate his plots. His subject matter, then, runs the risk we saw realized at several stages of both symbolic and classical art: if the work only reflects humans' everyday concerns, it will fail to be art. Shakespeare's particular brilliance, however, is to use the tools of drama familiar from Chapter 1 to elevate everyday concerns to the spiritual. The settings, plots, characters, and language of his dramas transform commonplace emotions such as ambition or jealousy into art: he takes, for instance, Macbeth's "reckless firmness, this identity of the man with himself and the end arising from his own decision," and nevertheless "gives him an essential interest for us" (*Ä:II*, 201/578).

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[19] Thekla does not actually die at the end of *Wallenstein's Death* but disappears after Max is killed. See Moland (2011b), 6. As Hegel points out, Miranda of *The Tempest* is another case of a heroine brought up in seclusion who is suddenly overcome by love. In this case, however, the love is ultimately fulfilled and the drama ends happily. Compare A20, 125; H23, 181; K26, 274; and Hm28, 77. It is likely no coincidence that all of Hegel's examples here are female.

[20] The danger of having subjective desires so deeply hidden that one can barely express them carries over from Shakespeare's time to Hegel's. Hegel's example from his own time is T. G. Hippel, whose *Careers in an Ascending Line* "grippingly depicts repressed characters especially who cannot disburden themselves, and, when it comes to action, act violently in a frightful way" (*Ä:II*, 209/584). I discuss Hippel's novel in the following chapter.

Shakespeare also depicts characters whose greatness elevates them beyond the tragic fates they suffer: their "free imaginative power and gifted spirit . . . lift them above what they are in their situation" (*Ä:II*, 210/585). Paradoxically, then, their greatness of character means they are not defined by the idiosyncratic ends for which they sacrifice their lives: their individuality "aggrandizes them and enhances them above themselves" (*Ä:II*, 210/585). Macbeth and Juliet are, in other words, more than their actions. They are individuals whose subjective aims are elevated by Shakespeare's poetic language and tightly woven plots.

Just as Mary's distant gaze suggested hidden depths in paintings by Memling or van Eyck, Shakespeare's characters fulfill romantic art's definition inasmuch as their subjectivity is infinitely richer than even their extreme actions can convey. Even Shakespeare's secondary characters such as Stephano, Trinculo, Pistol, and Falstaff are complex: they "remain sunk in their vulgarity, but at the same time they are shown to be men of intelligence with a genius fit for anything, enabling them to have an entirely free existence, and, in short, to be what great men are" (*Ä:II*, 210/586). This is another manifestation of Christianity's core conviction as Hegel understands it: Jesus's incarnation implies that every human, every subjectivity, is of value. Shakespeare somewhat ironically achieves a higher articulation of this originally religious claim by using secular content to convey human significance.

Despite his praise for Shakespeare's accomplishments, Hegel concludes this section on formal subjectivity with a cautionary note:

> In all these respects the sphere of such individual characters is an infinitely rich field; but it is readily in danger of declining into

> emptiness and banality, so that there have been only a few masters with enough poetry and insight to apprehend its truth. (*Ä:II*, 211/586)

The further it moves away from religious themes and toward the human, the more romantic art is on the verge of lapsing into "emptiness and banality": the more it risks, in short, ending. Religious art and chivalric poetry evaded this danger by being founded on transcendent religious narratives or fantastical plots. What can instead make character-based plays such as Shakespeare's dramas *art* is "enough poetry": the elevation of the everyday through language, plot, and setting. When Shakespeare attains this level of poetry, he achieves the essence of romantic art: art that showcases the subjective while indicating its own inability to capture that subjectivity fully.[21] If art, by contrast, *only* depicts the mundane—if the poetic is lacking—it will cease to be art.

B. Adventures

Having explored "the inner side" of formal subjectivity through Shakespeare's tragic heroes, Hegel says, "we must secondly turn our eyes also to the other side, to the particular circumstances and situations which stir the character." As we have seen, subjectivity has already advanced "to the point of having spiritual independence as the essential thing for it": it finds spiritual meaning only in its own aims, rejecting the given meaning on which both symbolic and classical art were founded. In this state, subjectivity is, as it were, so fixed that the situations through which it expresses itself are essentially insignificant. As a result of this disconnect, the "shape of external circumstances" into which the author places the character "also becomes explicitly free and therefore has its ups and downs in capricious adventures" (*Ä:II*, 142/528–529).

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[21] See Kottmann's argument that Shakespeare is the "fullest indication of how Hegel saw art's loss of vocation as registered *by art*" at Kottman (2018), 276.

In other words, Hegel thinks that a worldview as internally focused as the romantic will produce tragedy when it highlights the subjective obsession with the self and comedy when it focuses on the disconnect with the world generated by that obsession. Having detailed the tragic, he now turns to the comic, focusing on two works produced in approximately the same era as Shakespeare's plays: Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532) and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605). Hegel characterizes these works as *Abenteuerei*: excessive adventures whose fantastical nature prevents us from taking them seriously.[22]

The first thing to note is that both of these works return to chivalry's subject matter, namely the Crusades.[23] Ariosto's epic poem depicts the agonies of unrequited chivalric love against a backdrop of Christian knights battling their Saracen opponents; Cervantes describes his hero taking up the cause of knight errantry, seeking out adventures that will allow him to fulfill the Chivalric Code. As part of their recasting of the chivalric age, both Ariosto and Cervantes thematize the same abstractly subjective virtues that were featured in chivalric poetry. Love is "left to the fancy or mood of the lady"; honor and bravery are only ways for the hero to "display his courage and adroitness" (*Ä:II*, 215/590). The characters' contingent aims are matched by the capriciousness of external events. Again in sharp contrast to classical plots, here "only particular ends are to be accomplished, and absolutely necessary connections are missing" (*Ä:II*, 216/590). Anything can happen; the world is "a scene of complications and the rough and tumble of an endlessly flowing, mutable, and confusing contingency" (*Ä:II*, 211/586).

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[22] Hotho's 1842 heading is "*Abenteuerlichkeit.*" There is no section heading in H23. K26 and Hm28 use the heading "*Die Handlung*" (K26, 276; Hm28, 78). Notice again that this is not a chronological progression: Ariosto wrote almost a century before Shakespeare, and Cervantes was Shakespeare's contemporary. Indeed, Hegel does not describe this move to adventures as a progression at all, instead suggesting that he now intends to examine the effects of subjectivity on *external* events in contrast to the focus in Shakespeare, which is on the subject's interior life. This sort of passage disproves Kaminsky's claim that "[a]s the romantic age progresses, interest in the self-absorbed personality becomes so great that action becomes secondary" (Kaminsky 1962, 166). At issue here is not an intensification of self-absorption but the simpler goal of giving equal attention to subjectivity's effects first on character and then on circumstances.

[23] Scholarship describing Hegel on romantic art often does not adequately distinguish between his discussion of chivalric poetry, on the one hand, and his analysis of Cervantes and Ariosto, on the other. See ibid., 100, and Winfield (1995), 9. As I hope becomes clear, this oversight risks obscuring one of Hegel's important distinctions in this section.

What then differentiates artistic depictions of chivalric virtues at this stage from chivalric poetry proper? Why do chivalric characters appear first in a serious genre and only later in comedies? The answer has to do with emerging contradictions in the medieval Christian worldview. More even than in his description of chivalric poetry itself, Hegel here goes out of his way to deplore the Crusades' hypocrisy. Christianity proclaimed itself a religion not of this world, yet sought Jesus's empty tomb; the resulting discordance creates a "broken and fantastic situation" in which "[p]iety turns into inhumanity and barbaric cruelty." For someone of Hegel's Protestant conviction, blame for this barbarity and hypocrisy lands squarely on the Catholic Church's misinterpretation of Jesus's original message. The Catholic Church had erected a new papal hierarchy and made individuals beholden to priests for forgiveness instead of acknowledging humans' direct access to God. It had disregarded Jesus's claim that his kingdom was not of this world and asserted both political and military authority. Reformers, Luther among them, condemned the Crusades as an egregious example of this corruption of Jesus's message.

Although Hegel was not a traditionally observant Protestant and, as we will see, took the Protestant Church also to have corrupted Christianity's message in its own way, he unquestionably saw the Reformation as progress. Luther's assertion that each believer had direct access to God through faith is certainly closer to Hegel's claim that the human is the divine. The attack on the Church as a political power also corresponds to Hegel's conviction that the state should be based on political rather than religious principles. The slow, painful spread of secular political values after the Reformation had ultimately succeeded in promoting a more settled, secular normative sphere. Knights no longer roamed Europe and the Middle East, dispensing arbitrary justice (*Ä:II*, 216/590). Laws had been codified in philosophical terms, and the individual's part in determining norms had become less pronounced.

These positive developments also produced aesthetic changes. In the fourteenth century, medieval knights' pursuit of honor, love, and fidelity could be recounted earnestly. By the seventeenth century, such earnestness was impossible. A new expression of the medieval world's subjective excess in contrast with a new settled normative sphere was needed—a need fulfilled by setting this contrast against the backdrop of the Crusades' self-negating hypocrisy. Like the development of subjectivity that prompted the emergence of comedy in the classical world, this set of developments precipitates a transformation of genre: "Carried through consistently, this whole field of adventures proves in its actions and events, as well as in their outcome, to be an inherently self-dissolving *and therefore comical* world of incidents and fates" (*Ä:II*, 216–217/590–591, italics mine).

So Ariosto amuses us with the "fictitious entanglement of fantastic relations and foolish situations" (*Ä:II*, 217/591). Love is sensualized and mocked; heroism and bravery are "screwed up to such a pitch" that we can only laugh (*Ä:II*, 217/591). Ariosto's world is populated by orcs and hippogryphs; at one point his characters take a trip to the moon.[24] Throughout, "we find marvelous ramifications and conflicts introduced, begun, broken off, re-entangled, cross-cut, and finally resolved in a surprising way" (*Ä:II*, 217/591). These tales, Hegel says, lean toward the "fairy-tale side of adventurousness" [*das Märchenhafte der Abenteuerlichkeit*] (*Ä:II*, 217/591).

Cervantes, on the other hand, develops the "romance side" [*das Romanhafte*] of adventurousness, weaving together amorous and heroic adventures with themes familiar from earlier chivalric romances.[25] But here too we find an underlying self-negation: Don Quixote's character is "a noble nature in whom chivalry becomes lunacy"; his adventurousness "provides the comic contradiction between an intelligible self-ordered world and an isolated mind which proposes to create this order and stability solely by himself and by chivalry, whereby it could only be overturned" (*Ä:II*, 216/591). In other words, Don Quixote is a comic character (in however melancholy a way) because the contrast between his inner life and the outer world is so pronounced. He believes himself capable of determining justice in a way made impossible by new political stability.

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[24] Ariosto (2009), Canto 34.

[25] On this term and its derivations, see Knopf (1976) and Behler (1976).

Comedy's appearance at the point of a worldview's dissolution is not the only parallel between Aristophanes and *Abenteuerei*. Like Strepsiades, Don Quixote is initially sure of himself, comfortable in his madness (*Ä:II*, 218/591). But ultimately, he also abandons his attempt to forge his own path in defiance of the world around him: his deathbed renunciation of chivalry mirrors Strepsiades's setting fire to the Thinkery. Aristophanes's plays exposed the tension between subjectivity and objectivity splintering Athenian society; Cervantes shows the comic effects of an unmoored subjectivity in the face of more settled secular norms. Hegel writes that "thus in Greece Aristophanes rose up against his present world . . . and in Italy and Spain, when the Middle Ages were closing, Ariosto and Cervantes began to turn against chivalry" (*Ä:II*, 234/605).

The bawdy raucousness of Aristophanes's comedies does not prevent Hegel from considering them art. The same is true at this later stage. Ariosto is able, in the midst of his comic treatment of chivalry, to "emphasize what is noble and great in knighthood, courage, love, honour, and bravery" (*Ä:II*, 217/591). Just as Aristophanes showed what was worthwhile about Athenian *Sittlichkeit* while nevertheless mocking it and so was able to depict its decline in art, Cervantes highlights the nobleness of the chivalric temperament even as he shows its dissolution. Hegel also praises Cervantes's ability to depict complex, rich characters: compared to more two-dimensional characters in original chivalric poetry, Cervantes "has made his hero into an originally noble nature, equipped with many-sided spiritual gifts which always truly interest us" (*Ä:II*, 218/591).

Perhaps most importantly: *Clouds*, we remember, counted for Hegel as "true art" because it resisted both the satirical and the prosaic, depicting an ultimate unity of unity and division. In Don Quixote's final repudiation of chivalry, Cervantes depicts a subject reuniting with the whole after challenging it, achieving similar dialectical unity. The extreme contrasts of the romantic sensibility make it difficult to make good art. But in the comedies of these roughly contemporary authors—Shakespeare, Ariosto, and Cervantes—Hegel identifies three successful examples.[26]

5. The Domestication of Knights Errant: The Romantic Novel and the Prosaic Ends of Romantic Art

Don Quixote's deathbed renunciation of chivalry signals the end of an era in which tales of fantastical exploits satisfied humans' attempts to depict the Idea sensuously.[27] But the format of the quest survives in art's next phase, with the significant difference that both the protagonists and their adventures are grounded in the bourgeois, settled world. There is again here a parallel with Hegel's discussion of comedy at the end of the classical era: just as New Comedy, in Old Comedy's wake, domesticated comedy's themes, the chivalric exploits lampooned in *Abenteuerei* are abandoned for the prosaic domesticity of "romance [*das Romanhafte*] in the modern sense of the word."[28]

In these modern romances, adventures of knights errant give way to stories of disgruntled youth who feel themselves constricted by "police, law-courts, the army, political government" or by "the will of a father or an aunt" (*Ä:II*, 219/592–593). These youth become the "modern knights" who regard it as a "misfortune that there is any family, civil society, state, laws, professional business, etc., because these substantive relations of life . . . cruelly oppose the ideals and the infinite rights of the heart" (*Ä:II*, 219/593).

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[26] Compare A20, 125ff.; H23, 182; K26, 278–281; and Hm28, 78.

[27] For discussion, see Schneider (1995), 109.

[28] Here again the many etymological strands of "romantic" prove confusing. In the individual lecture transcripts, Hegel discusses the novel [*Roman*] in roughly equivalent sections, claiming, for instance, that "Der *Roman* schließt sich in einiger Entfernung an diesen Charakter überhaupt an. Der Roman hat auch einen Ritter zum Gegenstand, der sich aber nicht phantatsische Zwecke macht, sondern gewöhnliche Zwecke des gemeinen Lebens" (K26, 280. Compare A20, 128–129; H23, 182–183; and Hm23, 79). Hotho, however, titles this section "Das Romanhafte," which designated, at least in some cases, an adventurous tale of the style originated in the Middle Ages (Knopf 1976; see also Behler 1976). Knox adds to the confusion by translating *das Romanhafte* as "Romantic Fiction," which is closer to suggesting a novel than a romance, although Hegel never to my knowledge in these passages uses the word "*Fiktion*." Be that as it may: it is clear that Hegel sees this next period of literature as one in which the fantastical adventures of chivalry are replaced by prosaic concerns and a domestic denouement.

Two of Goethe's most famous works confirm this trend. *The Sufferings of Young Werther* shows a protagonist destroyed by bourgeois convention. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* documents its protagonist's struggle against society's restrictions and ends not in his death but with his joining the very norm-governed society he opposed. [29] Of a character such as Wilhelm, Hegel writes: "However much he may have quarreled with the world, or been pushed about in it, in most cases at last he gets his girl and some sort of position, marries her, and becomes as good a Philistine as others" (*Ä:II*, 220/593).[30] He continues in one of the work's most droll passages: "The woman takes charge of household management, children arrive, the adored wife, at first unique, an angel, behaves pretty much as all other wives do" (*Ä:II*, 220/593), and what Hegel memorably calls "*der große Katzenjammer*"—the great hangover—ensues (K26, 281). *Wilhelm Meister* is indeed a kind of quest, but it culminates not in the recapturing of a city or the recovery of a magic grail, but in domestic contentment and the promise of its accompanying bourgeois trials.[31]

This dismissal is remarkable, given what Hegel must have known about others' evaluation of *Meister*'s importance. Friedrich Schlegel had famously proclaimed that "The French Revolution, Fichte's philosophy, and Goethe's *Meister* are the greatest tendencies of the age."[32] *Meister* had also been held up by A. W. Schlegel as evidence that Goethe was Shakespeare's descendent and so the inheritor of the modern, romantic sensibility.[33] Hegel appears to have had no such convictions about the work's world-historical importance. He instead fixates on the novel's domesticity and its threat to the poetic essence of art. He in fact barely references the novel as a modern genre at all, apparently overlooking, for instance, the Schlegel brothers' musings about the novel as *the* modern (or romantic) genre because of its embrace of "all the paradoxes, dichotomies and approaches to the world's intimate mysteries."[34]

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[29] Hegel may have had other contemporary examples of this kind of literature, often (controversially) called the *Bildungsroman*, in mind, for instance Christoph Martin Wieland's *Die Geschichte des Agathon* (1766–67), Sophie von La Roche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (1771), and Karl Philipp Moritz's *Anton Reiser* (1785–90).

[30] Hegel's use of "Philistine" here might be an allusion to the fact that Wilhelm, in recounting a childhood memory of staging a puppet show of the David and Goliath story, associates his father's desire for him to go into business with Goliath, the Philistine giant who is defeated by David's courage.

[31] Hegel's dismissive judgment about these plots' resolutions is too reductive, at least when applied to *Wilhelm Meister*. It is true that Wilhelm is ultimately united with the woman he loves, but several remaining ambiguities prevent the novel from being a simple pairing off of lovers. See Curran (2002): 304–307.

[32] Schlegel (1971), 190.

But in Hegel's view, the novel's capitulation to the prosaic means that these works risk no longer being art. This risk plays out in several ways. First, contemporary romances are written *in prose*: they risk on the most fundamental level not being poetic. *Don Quixote* is also written in prose, but its adventures and Don Quixote's compelling character keep it from lapsing into the prosaic. Goethe's version of the romantic novel, by contrast, has no such recourse to the fantastical. Secondly, we saw in Chapter 1 Hegel's warning that narratives set in the present would render the artist unable to make the familiar strange and so incapable of achieving the distance necessary to prompt humans' reflection on their place in the world. This is all the more important given that modern society is predominantly prosaic and thus less capable of generating a truly aesthetic response. So while contemporary romances still concern themes like love or ambition, as did Shakespeare's plays, these emotions are often not sufficiently elevated. They are simply embedded in everyday life and tamed by the story's end.

The modern romance *can* nevertheless remain art so long as it manages, despite its domesticity, to sound idealist themes: to show humans as forming and being formed by the world or by making the familiar strange and the strange familiar. Some romantic novels indeed achieve these goals since, as Hegel wryly notes, it takes a lively imagination to convince oneself, much less a reader, that one's beloved is, in all her bourgeois familiarity, actually the most beautiful, virtuous woman in the world (K26, 281). Insofar as that imagination is foregrounded and ordinary love is depicted as extraordinary, the author can achieve "enough poetry" to elevate the everyday experience similar to Shakespeare's elevation of love or jealousy. That poetic fantasy—even if it is destined to be punctured by the domesticity that follows—can save these prosaic quests from losing their status as art. Here, I think, is clear evidence that Hegel does not believe there is nothing else for art to do and instead aims to suggest what it can, in fact, continue to do. Hegel is aware that the institutions of modern life can be alienating and enervating. He will ultimately claim that art can allow us to find meaning in the prosaic everyday, and that it can help us see modern institutions as our own creation and therefore part of our self-determination. But unless and until that happens, the prospects for this kind of art are dim.

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[33] Gjesdal (2018), 263.

[34] Ewton (1972), 106. A. W. Schlegel, Ewton continues, characterized the novel as the "genre which represents the whole of romantic poetry." Friedrich Schlegel, to quote Rutter, "was the form best suited to the 'progressive, universal poetry' which is in turn the essence of modern literature" (Rutter 2010, 258). Rutter gives an extensive analysis of Hegel's dismissal of the novel because of its tendency to be just about "an ordinary guy": ibid., 258–265.

The triumph of the prosaic thus signals romantic art's decline, and indeed, the next section of Hegel's lectures is ominously entitled "The Dissolution of Art: The Prosaic and the Subjective." There Hegel will document the disintegration of art's fragile attempts to show the human becoming divine into its familiar subjective and objective extremes. Art will then end yet again, only to be resurrected by new forms of art that even more explicitly express the Idea while simultaneously undermining their status as art.

5

The Dissolution and Future of the Particular Arts

1. The Aesthetics of the Human Heart

At the end of its romantic development, we find art struggling to achieve *poetic* articulations for a content that is, for good philosophical reasons, prosaic. In true dialectical fashion, however, this struggle will ultimately allow the fullest unity of unity and division and so the most complete, if not the most beautiful, sensuous expression of the Idea. But before describing this achievement, Hegel first follows the development of romantic art to its dialectical end.

The domesticity of the romantic novel frees the artist to embrace the mundane completely: art "makes itself at home in the finite things of the world, is satisfied with them, and grants them complete validity," Hegel says, "and the artist does well when he portrays them as they are" (*Ä:II*, 221/594). We see this elevation of the everyday already in Shakespearean plays in which sentries, domestic servants, and fools as well as "everyday vulgarities, taverns, carters, chamber-pots, and fleas" are made the topic of art. But Shakespeare's main protagonists were still generally noble, and his plots, while mostly devoid of religious subject matter, often include substantial issues such as family relations or political succession. Despite their transition from the fantastical to the everyday, the quests that made up romantic fiction retained some of these conventional themes. Art that dialectically follows it, however, does not. After romantic novels, art "strips away from itself all fixed restriction to a specific range of content and treatment"; now it finally "makes *Humanus* its new holy of holies [*zu ihrem neuem Heiligen den* Humanus *macht*]: i.e. the depths and heights of the human heart as such, mankind in its joys and sorrows, its strivings, deeds, and fates"

(*Ä:II*, 238/607).[1] The slow rejection of divine or fantastical content and the embrace of the human mundane has been art's long-term trajectory; at the end of the dialectical development of romantic art, that trajectory is almost completed.

The incorporation of the mundane into art, in turn, has the revolutionary consequence that any content can be art. If, as Hegel says, "subjective inwardness of heart becomes the essential feature to be represented, the question of which specific material of external actuality and the spiritual world is to be an embodiment of the heart is equally a matter of accident" (*Ä:II*, 221/594). The sphere of possible topics "widens indefinitely" to include "man's daily active pursuits . . . his casual habits and situations, in the activities of family life and civil society business" (*Ä:II*, 223/596).

Once anything can be art, romantic art breaks into the two components that classical art had held together. In classical art, the "external is the very own shape of the inner itself and is not released therefrom into independence" (*Ä:II*, 221/594). In romantic art, by contrast, the deep subjectivity expressed by Shakespeare or Cervantes's characters meant that the two separated, generating either tragic or comic endings. In the current stage of what he calls art's "dissolution" [*Auflösung*], Hegel describes what happens when those two extremes are not even held together by a Shakespearean hero or a Quixotic plot. Hegel puts the emerging binary this way: we have, on the one hand, "the real world" in its "prosaic objectivity" and, on the other hand, "the *subjectivity* of the artist which, with its feeling and insight, with the right and power of its wit, can rise to mastery of the whole of reality" (*Ä:II*, 222/595). Put more succinctly: the two corresponding ends of art are imitation and what Hegel calls subjective humor. Understanding why these extremes no longer count as art will help us understand how art in the romantic world continues to end. Hegel's analysis of what can save artworks from succumbing to them will clarify how art continues to be possible.

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[1] See Donougho's discussion of the origin of this idea in Goethe's phrase "*Humanus heißt der Heilige*" at Donougho (1982).

2. The Dissolution of Art: Imitation and Subjective Humor

Hegel first discusses the objective extreme. Here the artist abandons the attempt to express her subjectivity altogether and resorts to imitating the object. Romantic art, which already was more or less “portrait-like,” devolves completely “into the presentation of a portrait, whether in plastic art, painting, or descriptive poetry” (*Ä:II*, 223/596). The issue is the same here as with descriptive poetry at the end of symbolic art and New Comedy or agreeable sculptures at the end of classical art: strictly imitative works present a disenchanted world, claiming to mirror simply what is there instead of exposing humans’ mutual formation of reality. Such works do not “strip the world of its inflexible foreignness” but simply reproduce the familiar. They consequently are “unbeautiful and prosaic” (*Ä:II*, 223/596).

Hegel gives two kinds of examples. The first is the hyper-realism and domesticity of Dutch genre painting, in which anything, even tooth extraction, can be the subject of art (*Ä:II*, 226/598). We will see that Hegel thinks the Dutch are capable of transcending this realism, but in cases when such painting is nothing but the perfect reproduction of the artist’s surroundings, it does not elevate human endeavors beyond the mundane to an expression of the Idea and so loses its status as art. His second category of examples includes poets such as Iffland and Kotzebue, who use only “natural” language and so “counterfeit the daily life of their time in prosaic [and] rather narrow respects with little sense for true poetry” (*Ä:II*, 225/597). These passages are reminiscent of Hegel’s later discussion of poetry as an individual art, in which he references Schiller’s “Shakespeare’s Ghost,” a satirical poem from 1804 in which Schiller depicts Shakespeare returning from the dead to inquire about the current state of tragic and comic drama (*Ä:III*, 547/1215). Schiller’s imagined interlocutor responds that neither has survived: instead, poetry depicts only what is “Christian and moral/And what is downright popular, homely, and common.” Aghast, Shakespeare demands to know how humans can reach their potential without being inspired by tales of heroes struggling against fate. His interlocutor responds that no such heroism is necessary: “All nonsense! Ourselves and our good companions/Along with our sorrows and needs, are what we seek and find here."[2] Hegel agrees, it seems, with Schiller's assessment that if drama simply mirrors humans' concerns back to them without calling them to recognize deeper truths about themselves, it fails to be art.

Imitation is the first dialectical extreme in art's threatened dissolution; the second is what Hegel calls subjective humor. We might think that Hegel here intends to reprise the ways in which comedy figured in classical art's end. But in referencing humor, Hegel indicates a new aesthetic category essentially invented in the eighteenth century by the British novelist Laurence Sterne. Humor was not generally used synonymously with comedy or with the laughable in Hegel's generation; indeed, several philosophers of this period treated it as a unique aesthetic phenomenon.[3] Hegel himself defines it as "subjective notions and witticisms, etc., in which deep insight appears accidental and spontaneous."[4] Humor's precise definition is contested, but a sense of Sterne's novels can help clarify Hegel's use of the term. Sterne's characters, especially in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen*, are perhaps best known for their eccentricities and specifically for their obsessions—their famous "hobbyhorses"—that have infinite value to them but no value to others. They are, in other words, characters focused around their own subjectivity. Sweeping substantial themes that survived in Shakespeare's plays are absent, as indeed is any attempt to weave a coherent plot. Instead, Sterne's narrator, Tristram Shandy himself, provides the book's negligible coherence. He repeatedly disrupts the plot's trajectory by returning to its beginning, ensuring that he as narrator is never far from the reader's mind.

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[2] Schiller (1943ff.), 2.1, 306; translation mine.

[3] Among these were Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, Karl Solger, Jean Paul Richter, and E. T. A. Hoffmann. I detail this history in Moland (2018). See other essays in that volume as well as Preisendanz (1977), 7 and Vieweg, Vigus and Wheeler (2013). See also Vieweg (2005a).

[4] The failure to take humor's specific history into account, and in particular the mistake of conflating it with comedy, has led some scholars to draw inaccurate conclusions about this part of Hegel's dialectic. See, for instance, Bubner (1980), 30; Gethmann-Siefert (2005a); and Winfield (1995), 13. For discussion of these views, see Pillow (2000), 225–226. Rutter adds Pippin to the list: see Rutter (2010), 229. See also Winfield's claim that the end of romantic art could signal "art's greatest success in conveying the truth of rational agency" (Winfield 1995, 18). Winfield also, however, I think mistakenly classes humor as still a part of the formal independence of character.

In contrast to Kotzebue's dogged naturalism, Sterne is doing anything but imitating a prosaic world: what we find is instead the "stark subjectivity of the artist himself." What matters here, Hegel says, "is not the forming of a finished and self-subsistent work, but a production in which the productive artist himself lets us see himself alone" (*Ä:II*, 229/600).[5]

Despite this extreme subjectivity, as we will see, Hegel credits Sterne with producing successful art. But he reserves some of his harshest criticism for one of Sterne's most successful German disciples, namely Jean Paul Richter. In a series of massive, rambling novels, Jean Paul (as he was known to his contemporaries) followed Sterne's example by indulging in repeated digressions and by frequently inserting personal commentary into his plots. His fictional narrators recount their struggles with writing, conspiratorially divulge their (fictional) sources, or complain about the reader's snoring.[6] In a fictional lecture that concludes one of Jean Paul's essays, every audience member save one leaves in disgust; the remaining audience member is himself a character from Jean Paul's novels.[7] Jean Paul admits that this echo-chamber of self-referentiality can sometimes flummox the reader. But in his theoretical work *Preliminary School for Aesthetics*, he justifies these excesses, describing humor as an "inverted sublime" that measures the infinite detail of everyday life against our loftier goals.[8] To achieve this contrast, Jean Paul suggests, the humorist must reject all elevated perspective and embrace the standpoint of the "I." Indulgence, he claims, is owed the writer who undertakes to bring humor to the page: "The author in general, but the comic author in particular, must be met with as much hospitable openness as the philosopher is met with militant reserve, to the advantage of both."[9]

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[5] There is, in fact, no confirmation in the lectures that Hegel mentions Sterne in this context, but there is also no question that humor was widely discussed among Hegel's contemporaries as originating with Sterne. Sterne was, at the time of Hegel's lectures, taking the German reading public by storm; his books were hugely admired not just by the general public but by German literati such as Herder, Hamann, and Lessing, the last of whom claimed he would happily give five years of his life to Sterne in exchange for Sterne's promise to continue writing. See Thayer (1905), 31, 40.

[6] Ibid., 382; Dale (1981), 304.

[7] Richter (2013), 336. See Rush on subjective versus objective at Rush (2016), 191. As will become clear, I do not agree with Rush that Hegel includes humor and irony under the heading of comedy or with the related claim that Hegel differentiates between subjective and objective comedy in a way that parallels subjective and objective humor (ibid., 264, 191). See also Rush (2010).

[8] By this, Jean Paul means that whereas the sublime confronts us with the majestic and, by comparison, awakens our awe at our own rational powers, humor exposes the eccentric trivialities of everyday life and asserts meaning in the face of their apparent meaninglessness. See Richter (2013), §33 and Vieweg (2005b).

Many of Jean Paul's contemporaries granted him this welcoming openness, but Hegel did not. According to Hegel, Jean Paul's self-referential, obsessive style was evidence of modern subjectivity's excesses prompting art's demise. The *subjective* humorist (a designation Hegel apparently invented for Jean Paul) concludes from romantic art's dual emphasis on the mundane and on the artist that any reflection on any topic can be art, provided it is woven together by *his* subjectivity. His art is "only a sporting with the topics, a derangement and perversion of the material" in which "the author sacrifices himself and his topics alike" (*Ä:II*, 229/600–601).[10] Such subjective excess cannot, on Hegel's view, be art since it makes no effort to reconcile subject and object or subject and substance; in short, it does not attempt to reveal the Idea in sensuous form.

Surveying these developments—imitation, on the one hand, and subjective humor, on the other—Hegel's preliminary conclusion is bleak. We have, he reports, "arrived at the end [*bei dem Schlusse*] of romantic art," a state at which "the artist's subjective skill surmounts his material" since he "retains entirely within his own power and choice both the subject-matter and the way of presenting it" (*Ä:II*, 231/602). After art disintegrates into imitation, on the one hand, and subjective humor, on the other, it seems there is nowhere further for art to go, and Hegel announces for instance in 1826 that art reaches its end, disintegrates, and "peters out."[11]

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[9] Richter (2013), §34. Jean Paul's use of the word "comic" here is a reminder that these words were rarely completely differentiated, but the evidence from Hegel and other contemporaries indicates that most theorists at the time clearly distinguished between comedy and humor.

[10] Compare A20, 128; H23, 187–188; K26, 286; and Hm28, 80. The thoroughness of this condemnation is somewhat surprising, given Hegel and Jean Paul's personal friendship: see Pinkard (2000), 377–381.

[11] Compare A20, 129; H23, 189–190; and K26, 286–287. See Gethmann-Siefert's argument that Hegel's assessment of art's end is more dire in the 1828 lectures. She suggests that this shift reflects parallel changes in the 1827 edition of the *Encyclopedia*: Gethmann-Siefert (1991).

But what does this mean? I have argued throughout this book that Hegel speaks of the end of art in several ways. In which way does art end here, and what can we learn from this stage about Hegel's end of art thesis generally? Certainly all romantic art already exists in the shadow of art's most profound, historical ending since the emergence of Christianity has meant both that art cannot express humans' essential inwardness and also that it can only depict rather than create religious meaning. But since this is true of all romantic art, it is unlikely to be the primary sense in which Hegel speaks of art's ending here. Hegel could also be referring to the fact that, like symbolic and classical art, romantic art begins with incomplete cases, reaches a paradigmatic example, and then declines into prosaic subforms, in this case imitation and subjective humor. But this, too, would not differentiate romantic art from symbolic and classical art and so not merit the particular pessimism Hegel seems here to express.

Since romantic art is the final particular form of art, however, its disintegration into objective imitation on the one hand and subjective humor on the other is indeed particularly significant. Symbolic art, with its inadequate content and inadequate form, transitioned into classical art; classical art, with its inadequate content and adequate form, transitioned into romantic art. Romantic art combines adequate content with inadequate form. There is indeed nowhere else, conceptually, for art to go. The dialectic has, as it were, played itself out; the particular arts' developmental potential is conceptually exhausted. This, I believe, is the principal sense in which Hegel speaks of art's ending in these concluding passages describing the particular forms of art.

But what does this conceptual ending mean for art's future? Does it indeed, as some have claimed, mean that Hegel believes no art can be made after his lifetime? Or does it instead suggest that art will continue but in a forever diminished form? Here I want to return to Hegel's claim that philosophical history is the history of freedom, as referenced in the Introduction. Early civilizations knew that one person (the ruler) was free; classical civilizations knew that some humans (excepting slaves) were free; only in the modern world has the realization that *all* humans are free been articulated. When history ends, it is not because nothing more will happen or people will no longer write history. It is because history has reached the last logical articulation of freedom (again: there is nowhere to go, conceptually, beyond "all") and will now always be the story of humans working out the immense consequences implied by the claim that all humans are free.

I believe that a similar dynamic underlies Hegel's pronouncement, at this particular point, that art has come to an end. Now that humans have come to recognize the human in the divine and so have begun to embody, however imperfectly, the truths of idealism, the future of art will consist in articulating new ways of expressing that truth. How the truth is conveyed will change, and, as we see from imitation and subjective humor, there will be ample failures. But the goal will not change. So art has ended in the sense that no new content will be introduced to particular art forms. Its content from now on will concern humans grappling with their status as art's new holy of holies. And since, for all the reasons outlined in the previous chapter, art in the post-romantic world by definition will never be adequate to its content, it will be successful only when exhibiting its own inadequacy. Here I think Gardner is right to emphasize one of Hegel's disagreements with philosophical romantics such as Schlegel and Novalis. Contrary to his own youthful assertions, Hegel no longer thinks art can give the highest access to truth. He thinks, in other words, that the romantics' "investment in art is misguided" and that art should reflect rather than deny this "loss of vocation."[12]

So Hegel calls not for the abandonment of art but for a better understanding of what art means in the context of a prosaic age that art by definition cannot fully grasp: an age in which humans are aware of their own divinity, anti-climactic though it might be, but still searching for ways to embody that awareness. And indeed, Hegel suggests that he is not giving up on art but instead wants to "draw attention to a coalescence of these extremes," namely imitation and subjective humor, in romantic art (*Ä:II*, 239/608). In other words, he aims now to discuss ways in which, despite its extreme polarization, the romantic worldview can still produce art.[13]

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[12] Gardner (2018), 360. Gardner suggests that art that pretends otherwise is a kind of "unhappy consciousness."

3. The Future of Art: Spiritualized Imitation and Objective Humor

A. "Living Naturalness" in Poetry and Painting

Art's future requires a series of correctives to its objective and subjective extremes. Confirming again that the development of particular arts is conceptual rather than chronological, Hegel turns for these correctives to great art either of the recent or distant past. Shakespeare, Goethe, and Schiller all serve as exemplars of artists capable of resisting imitation or "naturalness" in poetry. While Kotzebue puts before the public "the man in the street in his ordinary present activity and concerns," including "where the shoe pinched in his own particular circumstances" (*Ä:II*, 347/268), Goethe and Schiller achieve "a deeper content and essential conflicts full of interest" and so achieve a "living naturalness" that is neither purely imitative nor subjectively indulgent (*Ä:II*, 224/597). Shakespeare, Hegel again suggests, manages through poetic transformation to elevate the prosaic to the artistic through his own insight and wit. Poetry can be rescued from the danger of imitation when the artist finds deeper content and raises that content out of its context through artistic resources such as diction and plot. As Hegel will argue in his chapter on poetry, these tools allow poets to emphasize humans' own participation in language and so to highlight idealist themes.

A similar possibility is realized in genre painting, whose extreme domesticity and hyper-realism, as we saw, threaten its status as art. But if the artist is able to locate spiritual meaning in the domestic scenes he chooses to depict, he may be able to give that subjective content substantive value or, perhaps more accurately, to draw out the substantial value already present in a seemingly mundane scene. Although a family teaching their cat to dance may not be beautiful in any conventional sense, Jan Steen's careful attention to such a moment exposes its spiritual content: a moment in which a human is investing something with meaning (see Color Figure 2). What is impressive about this art is then not primarily its "lifelikeness" but its ability, as Hegel says, to portray "a smile, the expression of a swiftly passing emotion, ludicrous movements, postures, facial expressions—to grasp this most transitory and fugitive material, and to give it permanence for our contemplation in the fullness of its life" (*Ä:II*, 227/599).[14] Rutter has rightly emphasized the *Lebendigkeit*, or liveliness, that characterizes this kind of painting when small details of everyday life are rendered with such care and attention that they take on a significance far beyond their ostensible subject matter.[15]

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[13] The location of this comment might be read as suggesting that only objective humor, and not Dutch genre painting, has the potential to coalesce art's conceptual extremes. But for reasons I outline in what follows, I think that genre painting and objective humor share deep similarities and that the potential for coalescing romantic art's extremes applies to both.

Grasping spiritual meaning through mundane activity, Hegel concludes, "is the hard task of art at this stage" (*Ä:II*, 730/599). The artist, by investing his own time, efforts, and talents into depicting the scene, identifies it as something worthwhile. Paintings that can successfully depict the spiritual aspect of these domestic scenes are thus "a triumph of art over the transitory, a triumph in which the substantial is as it were cheated of its power over the contingent and the fleeting" (*Ä:II*, 227/599). Such art "can make significant even what is in itself without significance" (*Ä:II*, 223/596). It no longer needs classical or religious narrative to attain the spiritual: since humans are the holy of holies, their concerns, if appropriately expressed, *become* the substantial, and the human everyday supplies life's spiritual content.

Another way the interpenetration of spiritual and mundane can be made evident in this kind of painting is its showcasing of the particular artist's skill. If we are tempted to dismiss genre paintings as mere imitation, Hegel says, "closer inspection reconciles us to them. For the art of painting and of the painter is what we should be delighted and carried away by. And in fact if we want to know what painting is we must examine these little pictures in order to say of this or that master: *He* can paint" (*Ä:II*, 226/598).[16] In anticipation of his attention to color as painting's essence, discussed in Chapter 8, Hegel here lauds Terburg (also known as ter Borch) for his uncanny ability to evoke the "glistening and gleaming" of satin with nothing more than "white or yellow strokes, points of colour, colored surfaces" (see Color Figure 3) (*Ä:II*, 228/601). In the same period, the Dutch also perfected the still life, showing themselves able to evoke "grapes, flowers, stags, trees . . . [and] the finery and decoration of the furnishings of everyday life" with stunning veracity: more evidence of their thorough investment in the terrestrial and domestic (see Color Figure 4). Because of this new attention to artists' skill, artists themselves gain prominence and visibility in the romantic age: an artwork accrues value not only through its appearance but through its association with its maker. This, Hegel suggests, is more evidence that the artist's investment of his subjectivity is central to our evaluation of the work in general.

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[14] For a history of Hegel's encounters with these paintings, see Sallis (2007), 107. Hegel mentions Steen in particular at *Ä:II*, 227/599.

[15] Rutter (2010), 92–100.

It is no accident, in Hegel's view, that Dutch genre painting emerged when and where it did. The quiet scenes of domesticity familiar from these depictions, in short, offer an expression of Dutch national character. A Dutch portrayal of family life is infused, as it were, with the artist's pride in the fact that the Dutch have wrested a living from an unforgiving landscape. Their Protestantism, defended at great cost against Spanish imperial rule, is also expressed in their domestic depictions: "the important thing is to get a sure footing in the prose of life, to make it absolutely valid in itself independently of religious associations" (*Ä:II*, 225–226/598). Such images, in other words, reject the Spanish Catholic claim that the divine is to be found in royal grandeur and instead embody the claim that the human has become the divine. There may be nothing traditionally beautiful about a "woman threading a needle by candlelight," but by sensuously evoking this unity with the divine, such paintings can fulfill art's mandate (see Figure 5.1) (*ÄII*, 227/599). This background mitigates the concern that

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[16] Compare A20, 128–129; H23, 186–187; K26, 284–285; and Hm28, 79.

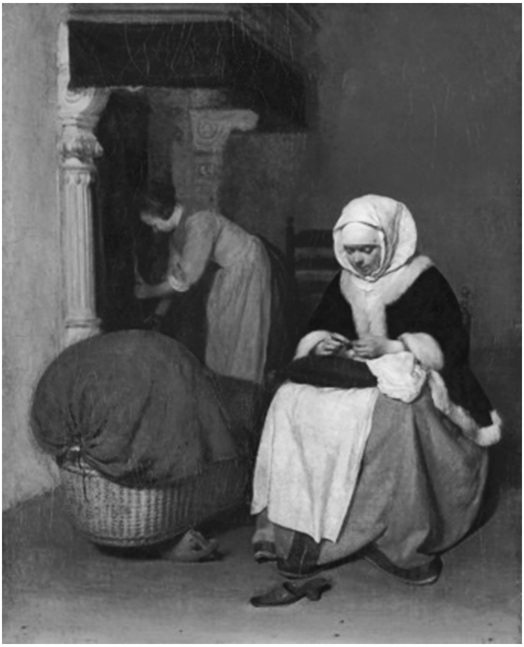

Figure 5.1 Gerard ter Borch, *Woman Sewing beside a Cradle*, c. 1656.

Hegel favors Dutch genre painting because it is bourgeois and uncontroversial, an "art of coziness," as Rutter puts it, that leads to Norman Rockwell.[17] If there is coziness here, it is hard-won, intentional, and even rebellious: an implicit rejection of an oppressor's worldview.

In both poetry and painting, then, Hegel suggests a way art can end in imitation as romantic art dissolves: in poetry if natural language simply replicates daily activities and in painting if there is not enough skill or elevation of the prosaic to inspire a deeper contemplation of spiritual meaning. In both cases, he also indicates how a work *can* still be art if it continues to strip the world of its foreignness and then show our mutual formation with it, all in ways that allow us to experience the Idea.

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[17] Rutter (2010), 64. Why exactly Hegel thought these seventeenth-century paintings could be models for nineteenth-century Germans is another interesting question: see ibid., 82.

B. The Heart Immersed in the Object: Objective Humor

Having suggested that romantic art can overcome its dissolution into imitation, Hegel turns to identifying a remedy for subjective humor's excesses.[18] First, despite disapproving of Sterne's disciple Jean Paul, Hegel seems to see potential for successful art in Sterne himself and in another of his imitators, T. G. von Hippel. Hippel was the now-obscure author of *Careers in an Ascending Line*, a work that certainly rivals both Sterne and Jean Paul's novels in length, in its protracted digressions, and in the relative insignificance of its plotline.[19] Like both Jean Paul and Sterne, Hippel sometimes disrupts the narrative to rebut his critics or introduce new "documents" such as diaries, letters, or overheard conversations.[20] *Careers* is also, to continue the comparison, full of eccentrics. Foremost among these is the death-obsessed count, known as the *Sterbegraf*, who invites the mortally ill to die in his castle, spends his days discussing the afterlife with them, and presides at their deaths.

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[18] The sourcing for Hegel's thoughts on humor is particularly unclear. Hotho adds several section headings not found in Hegel's original texts; he also, in addition to subjective and objective humor, adds a category called "true humor" (*Ä:II*, 231/602). Rutter suggests that true humor particularly involves the humorist directing his humor at himself and uses Hegel's discussion of T. G. von Hippel as an example (Rutter 2010, 221). The evidence for this interpretation is scanty, especially given that Hegel does not, in the lecture cycles, mention Hippel at this stage. But I agree with Rutter that Hegel perhaps considered Sterne's and Hippel's humor a kind of successful (true) humor as opposed to Jean Paul's subjective humor, and that there is a distinction to be made between their writings and the "objective" humor better exemplified by Goethe. The best source for Hegel's comments on Hippel is K26, 275; see also Hm28, 77.

[19] In one of the more bizarre literary intrigues of the late eighteenth century, speculation that Kant had authored significant parts of *Careers* at one point became so intense that Kant felt it necessary to publish a disavowal entitled "Erklärung wegen der v. Hippelschen Autorschaft." See Beck (1987), 102–103.

[20] Czerny (1904), 71; Beck (1987), 12.

Hegel nevertheless suggests that unlike Jean Paul, these authors manage to afford "precisely the supreme idea of depth" (*Ä:II*, 231/602). So whereas the chaotic details of Jean Paul's novels indicate only a restless, superficial connection, Sterne and Hippel manage to suggest that the "inner connection [of these details] must lie all the deeper and send forth the ray of the spirit in their disconnectedness as such" (*Ä:II*, 231/602). They achieve a "true humor" that exhibits "great depth and wealth of spirit," balancing eccentric subjectivity with an ability to "make what is substantial emerge out of contingency" and thus recapture art's potential.[21]

But beyond this more positive evaluation of traditional humorists, Hegel seems to have envisioned yet another way in which humor could positively contribute to art's new development and help it achieve its potential even in the fractured modern world. In the last sections of his description of romantic art, Hegel describes an art form that would transcend subjective humor's "namby-pamby and sentimental" tendencies and provide a "standpoint from which art can pursue its activity even in these days" (*Ä:II*, 222/595).[22] This standpoint is achieved when the humorist expresses his subjectivity *through the object*. Hegel continues:

> But if satisfaction in externality or in the subjective portrayal is intensified, according to the principle of romantic art, into the heart's deeper immersion in the object, and if, on the other hand, what matters to humour is the object and its configuration within its subjective reflex, then we acquire thereby a growing intimacy with the object, a sort of *objective* humor. (*Ä:II*, 240/609)

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[21] It can be difficult to make sense of Hegel's preferences here since a closer reading of Jean Paul's work, especially his theoretical essays, indicates that his ultimate goals were similar to Hegel's: Jean Paul also aspired to an art form that would allow humans to see the divine in themselves and their actions. William Coker has suggested that Hegel's displeasure is due to Jean Paul's insistence on a lack of reconciliation in art: see Coker (2018).

[22] The first three lecture cycles end with subjective humor as art's dissolution: only in 1828 does Hegel introduce the possibility of objective humor: see Hm28, 80. Rutter takes this addition of objective humor as evidence that Hegel became more optimistic about art's future between his penultimate and ultimate lecture cycles: see Rutter (2010) 48–49.

Unlike Jean Paul's excessive subjectivity, objective humor requires "a sensitive abandonment of the heart in the object" (*Ä:II*, 240/609). "[W]hat is especially at stake" in objective humor, Hegel says, "is that the heart . . . [be] entirely absorbed in the circumstances, situation, etc., tarry there, and so make out of the object something new, beautiful, and intrinsically valuable" (*Ä:II*, 241/610). Just as the painter's investment in objects made "significant even what is in itself without significance," humor should "raise the purely subjective appearance to what is actually expressive, and to make what is substantial emerge out of contingency" (*Ä:II*, 231/602).[23]

Under the description "objective humor," then, Hegel imagines poetry that takes an object and adds "a deep feeling, a felicitous wisdom, an ingenious reflection, and an intelligent movement of imagination which vivify and expand the smallest detail through the way that poetry treats it" (*Ä:II*, 240/609). The poet must continue to make something new out of each such iteration, since without constant new insight, such poems "about something, a tree, a mill-lade, the spring., etc." can "readily become lame" (*Ä:II*, 240–241/609). The challenge for the modern poet, then, will be constantly to renew objects by investing them with more subjectivity.

Hegel gives two examples. The first is Petrarch's love sonnets. Again we might be puzzled: it is not immediately clear what about a love sonnet is humorous or how a fourteenth-century author can be a model for contemporary art.[24] But if we take Hegel's characterization of the humorous—subjective notions in which deep intuitions appear accidental—we can perhaps make sense of Hegel's choice. In the sonnet, the author is immersed in thoughts of his beloved. His attention to her particular characteristics may seem subjective and the traits he praises accidental. Art's "loss of vocation" is clear. The poet is not trying to articulate grand, conventionally divine themes with the intent of shaping a religion or a worldview. But his attention shines a new light on the beloved, illuminating her in ways that are not only about her but also about him and, most likely, about love and life in general.

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[23] For the sourcing of this passage, see Hm28, 80–81. This sentence comes from Hotho's characterization of true humor, but it seems equally to apply to objective humor.

[24] Hegel's reference to Petrarch at this late stage of art is again evidence that the developmental story of art here is not primarily chronological. See Hm28, 81.

The objective humor expressed in a love sonnet differentiates, in other words, Petrarch's description of love from the contingency and subjectivity of chivalric love. It can embody the Christian love Hegel describes as newly possible in the romantic age, but now in its secular instantiation. Humans truly loving and recognizing each other achieve, in other words, the secular equivalent of Hegel's description of Christian love: a love originally captured in Mary's relationship to her divine son but that now extends to humans' recognizing the divine in each other. "This life in self in another," to quote Hegel again, "consists in giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self, yet in this surrender and oblivion having and possessing oneself alone" (*Ä:II*, 146/533; *Ä:II*, 155/539–540).[25] Love sonnets, it seems, have the potential to make this mutual recognition sensible and so embody, in a small way, the Idea. They can do this while signaling that art no longer gives us religion in the traditional sense but that this loss in status does not mean that art cannot allow us to experience truth.

As a second example, Hegel returns to the admiration for Persian poetry first expressed in his discussion of symbolic art. In characterizing this poetry as part of the positive sublime, Hegel had stressed that imagining god's presence in all things enabled poets to engage in "the most blissful and cheerful intimacy with objects in nature and their splendor" (*Ä:II*, 475/369). Here at the end of art, Hegel again references this cheerfulness: the "Persians and Arabs in the eastern splendour of their images, in the free bliss of their imagination which deals with its objects entirely contemplatively," he says, are "a brilliant example" of objective humor (*Ä:II*, 241/610). He then turns to a contemporary work inspired by this aesthetic tradition, namely Goethe's *West-östliche Divan.*[26] The *Divan* is a lyric cycle first published in 1819 and was one of Goethe's last major works. It was inspired by and modeled on the work of the Persian poet Hafiz; it is a long, many-faceted reflection on the love of a man, Hatem, for his beloved, Suleika.[27] Hegel calls the *Divan* "the highest accomplishment of poetry" (K26, 376). He describes Goethe as immersing himself in the objects described in the poems, seeking ever more vivid ways of describing them, using contrasts to unearth new insights about each. Interspersed in this metaphoric richness are meditations on love, history, nature, and religion. In one of the *Divan*'s poems, for instance, Goethe calls his own songs "[p]oetic pearls, which the mighty surge of your passion cast upon my life's deserted shore." He exhorts his beloved to "[t]ake them on thy neck, to thy bosom—raindrops of Allah, ripened in a modest shell," thus investing his songs with images of pearls, the ocean, a necklace, his beloved's bosom, and divine rain (*Ä:I*, 477/370). This new imagery enriches his creation (the songs) by affiliating them with natural objects, intensifies our appreciation of the natural phenomena in question, and prompts reflection on love and divinity.

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[25] Gethmann-Siefert, as Rutter points out, interprets humor as a "form of self-reflexiveness." Insofar as interacting with the object with this kind of intensity indeed prompts new knowledge of the self, this may be true, but I agree with Rutter that Gethmann-Siefert's analysis generally is too focused on the historical significance of Goethe's engagement with a foreign culture. See her comments in the introduction to K26, xxviii.

[26] See Hm28, 81.

What appears to strike Hegel about these poems is that Goethe's new comparisons are eccentric and subjective, but they also put the objects concerned at the forefront. The rampant subjectivity of Jean Paul's indulgences has been tamed; deeper themes, not just Goethe's idiosyncratic desires, hold the poems together. Goethe achieves a blend of imitation and subjective humor not unlike Dutch genre painting (Rutter in fact calls objective humor "genre painting in words"[28]) that allows us to witness the artist both transforming and being transformed by the object. Such poetry elevates objects while acknowledging that it is humans' interest that elevates them. Like Petrarch's love sonnets, it allows us to recognize the other—whether object or human—and acknowledge the mutual formation that results. Although objects are not self-determining and so not of equal value to humans, attending to them in this way achieves a kind of extension of Christian love beyond humans to the rest of nature.

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[27] For a comprehensive study of Goethe on Arabic poets, see Mommsen (2014). Pippin—in my view mistakenly—claims that the *Divan* counts as an example of "'objective comedy'" and that the "problem is how Hegel tried to think through his own characterization of the modern age as 'prosaic' and so not a fit subject for poetry, except for a certain kind of comedy" (Pippin 2014, 43). This description does not distinguish between Hegel's use of comedy and humor as discussed in the previous chapter. As should by now be clear, I also do not think that Hegel suggested that the modern age was not a fit subject for poetry. I will also argue in Chapter 11 that Hegel was skeptical about modern comedies.

[28] Rutter (2010), 222.

In articulating this truth, objective humor achieves several of art's main objectives. "The universal need for art," Hegel suggested, "is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self" (*Ä:I*, 50–51/31). Objective humor is the unity of unity and division: the poet recognizes the object as other, but she does not stop at this stage of prosaic disunion. She unites herself with the object by representing it poetically and allowing it to transform her as well. Objective humor correctly articulates that we cannot determine meaning subjectively and arbitrarily, but we can nevertheless give things coherence and then meaning when we communicate with our fellow humans in new and thoughtful ways. This conviction characterizes Hegel's philosophy from his most basic epistemology to his description of the self's formation: in all such cases, we need to acknowledge our own role in the mutual shaping of reality. Seeing ourselves in this light accomplishes another of Hegel's goals: it allows humans to recognize themselves as the part of the true that is the whole capable of *articulating* their own place *in* the whole. Both ancient Greek sculpture and objective humor show the unity of the human with the divine. But this unity is *consciously* achieved in humor, and also in a way that makes its provisional difference and reconciliation—or its unity of unity and division—clear.

Objective humor's potential does not imply that all future art must be poetry inspired by Persia or indeed be poetry at all. Instead, it suggests the *kind* of criteria that will apply to the art of the future.[29] In Chapter 1, we saw that Hegel enumerates the kinds of setting, character, and plot that make dramas, for instance, successful. In the late romantic age, successful artists will make decisions in each of these categories that exhibit objective humor's characteristics: they will choose the setting, characters, and plots that showcase an audience's participation in the existence of the art itself. They will balance subjectivity and objectivity and elevate humans' everyday concerns; they will display their own skill as skill instead of disappearing into the artwork. Since sweeping stories of epic importance risk minimizing the human, they will often choose themes that instead showcase human subjectivity expressing itself through interaction with the world. Art can now take any number of forms—painting, sculpture, dance, or drama—but it must, to quote Pillow, in some sense raise our "cognizance of our participation" in the world.[30]

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[29] For this reason, I think the philological complications regarding Hegel's use of objective humor are not as important as they might seem. Whether or not Hegel mentioned the examples Hotho includes, it is clear from what he otherwise says that art, if it is to survive, must include the characteristics Hotho attributes to objective humor.

But to return to Hegel's philosophy itself: an ongoing difficulty in interpreting Hegel's aesthetic theory has been the question of whether objective humor, coming at the conclusion of particular art forms, is their culmination or, by contrast, marks their collapse. I argue that it is neither. It is, on the one hand, certainly not the pinnacle of art *as art*. That status was achieved in the tiny period of classical sculpture that fully embodied the interpenetration of human and divine. But neither is it art's lowest point, a form of "greatly diminished ambition and importance," as Bubner claims.[31] It is instead a kind of art honed in the romantic age that guarantees the possibility of art's continuation. It counts *as art* because it allows humans to exhibit the divine in the human; it shows how humans mutually form reality through negotiation with things around them. It re-enchants nature; it brings subjective and objective together in a way that prevents either from "going free" as they did in chivalry's escapades or Don Quixote's adventures. In the case of Goethe's *Divan*, it does this in a *particularly modern way*, inviting authors to show, as Rutter puts it, their skill as skill and so make sensible to us their investment of their subjectivity in the object. In short, objective humor converts the prosaic into the poetic and, in so doing, shows the human becoming the divine and acknowledging that status.

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[30] Pillow (2000), 229.

[31] Bubner (1980).

4. The Artist after Art's End

Art's elevation of the human to art's holy of holies and its new mandate to express the divine in the human through the object also revolutionizes artists' relationship to their art. In the past, the artist was completely submerged in his time. He was "bound up" with his religious worldview, which was in turn "the true element in his own consciousness": it was "a material with which he live[d] in an original unity as part of his inmost self" (*Ä:II*, 232/603). The artist's task was only to make this content objective in some form, and the form itself was "the final, necessary, and supreme manner of bringing before our contemplation the Absolute and the soul of objects in general" (*Ä:II*, 232/603). Christianity's locating the divine in each human means that artists, too, become more reflective, and their relationships to their art can no longer be immediate. In the place of the artist's full identification with a worldview, we find reflection and criticism (*Ä:II*, 235/605).

The artist is now also closer to fulfilling the vision of Hegel's philosophical idealism: he began completely immersed in his subject matter, finds himself now independent of it, and has found a way to reunite himself with it consciously. This reuniting takes place in part through thought rather than through unreflective interaction with the work. Art now "acquires its real ratification [*Bewährung*] only in philosophy [*Wissenschaft*]" (*Ä:I*, 28/13).[32] Again we see that a positive development for idealist truth results in another way in which art ends. Just as art after the classical age is dependent on religion for its content, art at the conceptual end of the romantic age becomes dependent on philosophy for its very existence.

The fact that art's subject matter expands infinitely at the end of the romantic age affects artists as well. Instead of being a tool for representing religion, art is now a "free instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to any material of whatever kind" (*Ä:II*, 235/605). The artist's distance from his own material means that his attitude toward his art changes. "Protestants as we are today," Hegel announces, we "are not seriously in earnest with this material. It is the innermost faith which we lack here" (*Ä:II*, 233/604). This, then, is another way art can fail. If modern artists attempt to produce unreflective works using the forms of earlier, faith-based periods, the result will be sentimental and false. Here Hegel indulges in another personal attack on Friedrich Schlegel, whose 1808 conversion to Catholicism had scandalized many of their contemporaries. It will not help, Hegel says, to "turn Roman Catholic as in recent times many have done for art's sake in order to give stability to their mind"; the artist need "not be forced first to settle his accounts with his mind or worry about the salvation of his own soul" (*Ä:II*, 236/606). The artistic spirit need instead only be "sure of itself and confident in itself" (*Ä:II*, 236/606).

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[32] This line of thinking is behind much of Danto's twentieth-century application of Hegel's philosophy, especially his claim that art needs philosophy to be art at all. See Danto (1991) and Danto (1981).

But none of this loosening of art's content or the artist's relationship to her art suggests that anything an artist produces is, in fact, art on Hegel's view. Danto's claim that, according to Hegel, "[w]hatever comes next will not matter because the concept of art is internally exhausted" is not, it seems to me, accurate.[33] The overarching criteria of art remains: it must show humans' role in forming and being formed by the world and so as self-determining and free. Works that instead purport to show the world as it is or that indulge only a single human's point of view are prosaic in Hegel's sense: they do not reenact the unity between subject and world that Hegel believes is at the core of reality. Hegel says several times that he does not envy modern artists their task. There are no religious narratives to fall back on. So much is open to them, but so much is uncertain. But as long as artists are able to rise to the challenge of modeling the mutual transformation art embodies, the contemporary world will continue to produce art.

Hegel's description of particular art forms ends, then, with an evocation of the dangers of the modern world, a promise of art's continued potential, and a better idea of what art still has to do. He clearly considers some works produced in his generation to be art and thinks that art has important work to accomplish. He is optimistic about future artists' ability to achieve the sensuous expression of the Idea in even more complete form and so to carry art into the future. Art's dissolution in this sense need only be temporary, and when it overcomes this dissolution, it fulfills more completely the ambitious goals Hegel sets for art. Although we have reached the end of romantic art and with it the end of particular art forms, we have not reached art's end.

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[33] Danto (1986), 84.

PART III

THE SYSTEM OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARTS

6

Externality as Symbol

Architecture

1. The System of the Individual Arts: Introduction

In Part III of the *Aesthetics*, Hegel turns from describing symbolic, classical, and romantic worldviews as art forms to tracing the conceptual development of the individual arts. Here Hegel assesses the different ways in which art's sensuous embodiment—visual, tactile, audial—allows the Idea to appear. Hegel's dialectic procedure yields five individual arts: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry. Focusing on each individual art allows Hegel to ask when each art comes into its own: what is specifically *sculptural* about sculpture? What makes music music and poetry poetry? When does each achieve its essence most exactly? Which of the senses does each art engage, and how does that engagement affect its own development and its place in art's development generally?

Hegel's discussion of individual arts often overlaps with his analysis of particular art forms: the symbolic worldview is dominant in architecture; the classical reaches its peak in sculpture; Hotho classifies the last three arts as the "romantic arts."[1] For this reason, these three pairings are often discussed together as if architecture, for instance, were only an expression of the symbolic worldview.[2] But Hegel's concerns in Part III are markedly different and require separate analysis. Here Hegel focuses on particular features of each art rather than details of a worldview. He discusses the materials architecture should use, the visual effect of windows on gothic cathedrals, the proper posture of classical sculptures, the rhyme schemes most appropriate to poetry. In short, Part III draws our attention to art's role within Absolute Spirit as the mode of reflection *defined by the sensuous*: a status that both preserves art's value and ultimately limits its potential.

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[1] Hotho divides Part III into "I. Architecture," "II. Sculpture," and "III. The Romantic Arts," under which he includes painting, music, and poetry as subsections—a distinction Hegel does not, to my knowledge, use. I do not think this classification is unreasonable on Hotho's part, however, since Hegel associates the romantic era with the development of subjectivity and these three art forms show that development. Other classifications of the arts also shifted over time. In 1820 and 1823, architecture, sculpture, and painting are grouped under the heading "Die bildenden Künste" and poetic genres under the heading "Die redenden Künste." Later lectures drop this distinction and list the five arts equally.

Focusing on these details also allows Hegel to explore how the individual arts foster humans' sense of themselves. The arts enable us to reflect on our own embodied spirituality; they allow us to sense space and shape in the world around us as well as become aware of the inner space, time, and imagination that constitute our interior experience. They make us aware of our world and our selves as products of mutual formation on the level of feeling, perception, and selfhood: ways that go beyond the expression of worldviews emphasized in Part II. They also, Hegel thinks, help us understand our relation to the true that is the whole. How this happens will be the subject of the next six chapters.

Hegel places the individual arts in a hierarchical order. Architecture is the most limited of the arts; poetry is the highest. Drama, one of poetry's genres, is the culmination of the individual arts. As briefly outlined in the Introduction: in arguing for this hierarchy of the arts, Hegel places himself within a longstanding dispute among philosophers and practitioners, sometimes referred to by its Renaissance name, *paragone*, regarding which art was superior and why.[3] Often these debates were keyed to a similar debate about the senses. Which was superior: the solid externality of touch, or the mysterious interiority of sight? Was an art form better if it appeared to only one sense, like music, or to multiple senses, like drama? Was an art form superior if it required more or less knowledge to appreciate, or more or less skill to execute? What even counted as a discrete individual art? If dance originated in drama, could it also evolve to become independent? What of bas-reliefs and opera, genres that seemed to combine or blur the difference between other arts? Such questions were standard among earlier art theorists such as Wolff, Herder, Lessing, and Gottsched. Several philosophers of Hegel's time—Kant and Schelling among them—also structured their discussion of the fine arts around such hierarchies.[4] What, then, is the basis of Hegel's hierarchy, and how does he argue for it?

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[2] See, for instance, Kaminsky (1962), whose chapters simply combine particular and individual arts according to these pairings. Winfield, by contrast, raises serious questions about the compatibility of Parts II and III that I do not have space to address here. See Winfield (1996), 106–113.

[3] See Lichtenstein (2008), Chapters 1 and 2.

The "System of the Individual Arts" follows a dialectical trajectory from the *externality* of architecture to the *individuality* of sculpture to the *subjectivity* of painting, music, and poetry. Architecture's limitation is explained by its unspiritual matter. Drama's culminating status consists in its ability to unite all five arts in such a way that it models the unity of unity and division, combining the externality of architecture with painting and music's subjectivity into drama's embodied reflection on that subjectivity. In the end, drama will show us freedom embodied. But each art also enables us to resist the given by contributing to our ability to become aware of the way we form and are formed by the world. Each, in its way, thus helps us experience the truth of idealism as Hegel understands it.[5]

This is also true of the artistic process that produces each of these arts. When humans engage in the explicitly creative process of art, they convert materials—marble into sculpture, sounds into melody—in ways that result in new objects. In a genuinely aesthetic process, the artist does not simply impose pre-formed ideas onto her materials; she rather works out her idea through interaction with those materials. The resulting object is mutually determined. It models, then, the mutual formation that is central to Hegel's philosophy. Art allows us to sense explicitly the mutual formation that we otherwise engage in only implicitly. How this works in the case of individual arts will, I hope, become clear in the following chapters.

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[4] Kant (1990), §§51–53. On Schelling's choices, see Schelling (1989), Part II and Pöggeler (2000). Wolff claimed that architecture was the paradigmatic art (Beiser 2009, 47); in *Sculpture: Some Observations on Form and Shape from Pygmailon's Creative Dream*, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 7, Herder argued for sculpture.

[5] Hegel's hierarchy is also based on his discussion of the senses: see *EPG*, §401, where Hegel also refers us to the *Philosophy of Nature*'s sections on light, sound, and so forth.

Throughout the systematic development of the individual arts, we see several ways in which art ends. Each individual art, Hegel says in an echo of Winckelmann, has a "beginning, a progress, a perfection, and an end, a growth, blossoming, and decay" (*Ä:II*, 246/614). Like the particular art forms, once an individual art reaches its perfection, it begins to end, producing artworks still within its definition but that no longer achieve its highest potential. Each individual art also has its own conceptual end as architecture transitions into sculpture, sculpture into painting, and so forth. Art itself has its final conceptual end as poetry, already the least sensual of the arts, transitions into philosophy. Along the way, art has many prosaic endings: cases in which it fails to portray unification and so lapses into prose.

Hegel's own discussion of the individual arts sometimes ends abruptly. As we will see, he almost entirely neglects architecture after thirteenth-century gothic cathedrals; he has very little to say about modern sculpture or the musical revolutions taking place around him. I will argue that this is because Hegel, as he says in Part I, considers himself a philosopher and not a historian or connoisseur of art (*Ä:I*, 30/14). His primary purpose is to specify each art's conceptual development. Once that development is finished and the criteria for contemporary art are clear, he is happy to leave the application of those criteria to those who know the art world better. In arts with which he is more familiar—painting and poetry—he has more to say about how art can continue even after its conceptual development ends. Being aware of art's conceptual endings has the further advantage, then, of showing us where and why Hegel is willing to comment on the art of his contemporaries.

More than the particular forms of art, Hegel's discussion of the individual arts offers us the opportunity to engage with contemporary art both in theory and practice. How has architecture changed since Hegel's time, both in what is technologically possible and in what it is expected to achieve? How does abstract painting challenge Hegel's classifications or surrealist poetry unsettle his prescriptions for poets? It would be impossible to do justice to each of these questions here.

But in each chapter, I will indicate forms such further discussions could take.

2. The Origins of Architecture

How, then, does architecture reveal its essence, which will in turn explain both how it ends and what it reveals about our place in the world? The "first task of art," derived from "the Concept or essential nature of art itself," Hegel begins, "consists in giving shape to what is objective in itself, i.e. the physical world of nature" (*Ä:II*, 267/631). Architecture, as the first and most basic instance of the individual arts, must then quite simply give form to physical material: it must "build into what has no inner life of its own a meaning and form," or, in other words, shape inorganic matter in a meaningful way. But Hegel immediately prescribes a limitation to architecture's meaning. In order to remain architecture, the work in question's meaning must "remain external to it" (*Ä:II*, 267/631). One of architecture's tasks, then, is to allow inorganic matter, as spirit's opposite, to survive within art's parameters by not itself becoming spiritual, thus allowing otherness to be retained in the greater whole. As the first of the individual arts, architecture's task is to give the physical world meaning but in such a way that it is not transformed into the spiritual.[6]

This claim—that one of the individual arts must preserve the unspiritual in order for the system to be complete—allows Hegel to address a well-known problem with architecture's place within the philosophy of art. Definitions of art often stipulate that it be independent and non-functional, not produced for a use beyond stimulating aesthetic pleasure. Architecture's basic functionality—the fact that it shelters things—has therefore often prompted theorists, including eighteenth-century art historians, to proclaim architecture not worthy of being called art.[7] Kant, in turn, indicated that a building could only achieve adherent beauty since we necessarily have an idea of a building's concept.[8] Perhaps, others suggested, architecture only becomes art when it achieves some level of beauty or ornamentation beyond its function.

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[6] Kant (1990), §16. On the role of the organic in architecture, see also the discussion of Winckelmann, Schelling, A. W. Schlegel, and Leo von Klenze at Lohmann (2013), 232–236.

But in Hegel's own generation, there were notable dissenting voices. Friedrich Gilly and Karl Heinrich Heydenreich argued for architecture's place within the arts on both aesthetic and moral grounds. Leo von Klenze asserted that architecture could be art when it merged utility and beauty.[9] At the same time, Karl Friedrich Schinkel was transforming Berlin's architectural landscape, working to embody his conviction that architecture could improve citizens' characters and their shared civic life.[10]

Hegel takes none of these approaches to defending architecture as art. His dialectical method leads him to claim that architecture reaches its perfection when it *is* functional: when it serves a purpose beyond its own form.[11] Architecture proper is, in other words, not independent: it exists not for its own sake but in order to house the spiritual. This approach has several strange consequences, one of which is that architecture has its origin—its beginning before it reaches its perfection—in the sculptural. Its development will then lead it from massive sculptures that are independent, non-functional, and sculptural to classical temples that are dependent and functional. His dialectic leads finally to romantic architecture which is functional but undermines its function by seeming again to be independent and sculptural. This theory has not generally been considered a success.[12] I argue that it can be, provided that we focus on what Hegel considers architecture's primary function, namely, its ability to provide housing for the spiritual. It is, in addition, only possible to understand what Hegel means by the end of architecture—and so, in the long term, the end of the individual arts—if we follow its development through these stages.

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[7] Two of Lohmann's examples are Christian Ludwig Stieglitz and Johann Georg Sulzer. See ibid., 225.

[8] Kant (2000), §16.

[9] Lohmann (2013), 225, 235. Klenze was the most important architect of his generation in Bavaria. He was deeply influenced by and corresponded with Schelling. See ibid., 230–231. Schelling claimed architecture was only partially organic; Klenze thought it was thoroughly organic. See also Schelling (1989), §110.

[10] See Geary (2014), 23.

[11] Kant also described architecture as having an essential purpose but not one restricted to housing, prompting him to classify "all domestic furnishings" as architecture as well. See Kant (1990), §51.

[12] For examples of these criticisms, see Bungay (1984), 101–104 and Winfield (2000), 99–100.

The organization of this discussion of architecture repeats the categories—symbolic, classical, romantic—found in Part II. Although Hegel never adequately explains this fact, it is apparently because architecture's fundamentally symbolic nature means that it, unlike the other individual arts, must have a worldview to symbolize. But here in Part III, Hegel also gives an extended discussion of architecture *as architecture*: of its form, structure, and materials. He also emphasizes the emergence, in classical architecture, of the physically embodied spiritual and so the need for architecture to house that spirit. This emphasis begins to clarify what it is for us, as humans, to be *embodied* spirit. It is, Hegel claims, part of architecture's mission to bring this fact about ourselves to our attention and so to allow us to sensibly experience the interpenetration of spirit and nature that is also part of Hegel's idealism.

3. Independent or Symbolic Architecture

Hegel begins his analysis of architecture with very early structures such as the Towers of Babylon and Bel.[13] These massive constructions take matter as such, or what most obviously "has mass and weight" and through their sheer overwhelming, abstract form, express a "lofty idea . . . for apprehension by spiritual beings" (*Ä:II*, 273/636). The initial lofty idea is often a vague national feeling whose unformed but powerful force the large structures symbolize.[14] Hegel next discusses structures representing "productive energy of procreation" such as phallic columns or obelisks representing the rays of the sun (*Ä:II*, 279/641). The idea of the divine is still very abstract, associated simply with life forces and reproduction. As with the monstrous, fantastical creations described in symbolic art, representations of the divine here are grossly distorted. But they are more concrete than the initial structures that expressed a vague national feeling simply through their bulk.

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[13] Compare A20, 142; H23, 197; K26, 297–298; and Hm28, 83.

[14] Compare Schelling: "There are certain kinds of architecture where need and utility fall completely by the wayside, and its works are themselves the expression of absolute ideas that are independent of need. Indeed, often they even become symbolic, for example, in temples" (Schelling 1989, §107).

In both cases, however, these works fail in the core function of architecture, which is to "furnish an enclosure merely" (*Ä:II*, 294/653). While they indeed "stimulate thought" and "arouse general ideas," they do so "without being purely a cover and environment for meanings already independently shaped in other ways" (*Ä:II*, 273/636). We could be forgiven, Hegel admits, for objecting that especially figures representing natural forces or reproductive organs are not architecture but sculpture. In fact, he acknowledges that at this stage, "architecture and sculpture are confused" (*Ä:II*, 279/640). What makes these figures architectural and not sculptural, however, is their use: they are being employed not "in a sculptural way but in an architectural one" (*Ä:II*, 279/640). Hegel means by this that their effect is to define space through their sheer size or through their relation to each other. Colossal human figures like the Memnons of Thebes, for instance, are "in their grandiose and massive character more inorganic and architectural than sculptural" (see again Figure 2.1) (*Ä:II*, 282/643).[15] When such figures are multiplied and arranged in rows, they have "their worth only in such a regular order and size" that gave definition to the space around them (*Ä:II*, 282/643). Unlike sculpture, which will bring our attention to shape, architecture brings our attention to space.

Sphinxes likewise exhibit "architectural character" by being in regular rows that create the feeling of distinct, sacred spaces that later characterize temples. But they are not yet architecture proper since this regularity "becomes an end in itself" rather than "a support for architraves and roofs" (*Ä:II*, 284/644).[16] Even when areas for worship exist within these architectural spaces, they did not include room for supplicants. Such an enclosure does not count as a temple proper, Hegel says, but is "only a box, a treasury, a receptacle for keeping sacred images, etc." (*Ä:II*, 285/645). Even when there are symmetrical columns encompassing such spaces, they correspond to the signs of the zodiac, for instance, and are therefore symbolic rather than functional. The building remains an "end in itself, as itself a cult in which King and people are united" (*Ä:II*, 286/646). Architecture's essential function of *housing* the spiritual is not yet evident.

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[15] Rush suggests that the ancients had no concept of "space" in the sense of *Raum*, only of location and calls this an "infelicity in the text." See Rush (2018), 169.

This, in part, is because it is not yet clear what should be housed. At this point, Hegel says, the "inner and spiritual life has not yet apprehended itself" or "made itself the object and product of its free activity." "Self-consciousness," he continues, "has not yet come to fruition": humans have yet to think clearly about their own spiritual essences as existing, much less as needing to be housed. But their vague sense of the divine causes a restlessness that drives humans to ever more individuated representations of divinity. Figures representing the divine come to be used less to mark out space in their regular arrangement and instead become "ends in themselves, objects of veneration" (*Ä:II*, 280/641). Only at this point do humans "begin to make openings and hollow chambers in them and to place images of the gods in these" (*Ä:II*, 280/641). Architecture's defining question—how to house the divine—has finally emerged. Its independent figures have become sculptural, at which point sculpture and architecture separate and architecture proper begins.[17]

The Egyptian practice of housing the dead in particular marks a transition from independent to dependent architecture: from architecture that exists for its own sake to architecture whose function is to house beings that exist for their own sake. Egyptian religion achieves this transition by *beginning to think of humans as individual spiritual*

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[16] Compare A20, 144; H23, 200; K26, 302; and H28, 85.

[17] Given this account of sculpture's emergence, Kaminsky's claim that sculpture "originated out of a desire to enhance the appearance of architecture" cannot be right: see Kaminsky (1962), 71. I also think emphasizing architecture as essentially housing shows Winfield's criticisms of Hegel on non-representational sculpture to be misguided: see Winfield (1996), 108–110.

beings, a belief itself made possible by imagining them as preserved in their individuality even in death. Previous cultures, Hegel claims, believed that upon death, humans are reabsorbed into the divine and so lose the particular connection with their bodies that enables individuality. In Egypt, by contrast, the dead are "preserved against the idea of absorption into nature" and so "the spiritual begins in itself to be separated from the non-spiritual" (*Ä:II*, 291/650). This distinction is, for Hegel, philosophically crucial and prefigures the principle of sculpture:

> Individuality is the principle underlying the independent idea of spiritual life . . . . Consequently the honouring and preservation of the dead must count for us as the first important constituent in the existence of spiritual individuality, because here, instead of being sacrificed, individuality appears as preserved, inasmuch as the body, at any rate, as this natural and immediate individuality, is treasured and respected. (*Ä:II*, 291/650)

The center of worship becomes "an objective individual who appears significant on his own account and expresses himself in distinction from his habitation which thus is constructed as a purely serviceable shell" (*Ä:II*, 292/651). Massive forms that were previously sculptural and ends in themselves continue to be built but now with the purpose of providing this habitation. As majestic as they are, the pyramids were built not for their own sake but, Hegel claims, to be housing: they are "just simple crystals, shells enclosing a kernel, a departed spirit" (*Ä:II*, 294/653).

Architecture thus ceases to be independent: it "becomes separated from the meaning and, in this cleavage, subservient to something else." The spiritual meaning transfers from something hinted at by the architectural arrangement of massive figures to sculpture, which "acquires the task of giving form to what is strictly inner": that is, the task of portraying the embodied human (*Ä:II*, 294/653). As it takes on this special purpose, architecture must change in order to achieve it: it must be physically constituted so as to *house depictions of humans as spiritual individuals*. We begin, then, to see straight lines, regular forms, and right angles. For if architecture is to achieve its mission to be the part of the Idea that is inorganic nature—or, as Hegel puts it, “nature not in itself individualized and animated by its indwelling spirit”—it must renounce its organic form and emphasize the “abstract and mathematical” (*Ä:II*, 295/654).

4. Architecture Proper: The Classical

The fact that the divine needs a physical enclosure at all is evidence of humans’ evolving understanding of the spiritual, including their own involvement in the gods’ existence. Divine figures of this period, Hegel suggests, increasingly “belong to the realm of imagery and are called into being by human artistic activity” (*Ä:II*, 297/655). Consequently, a natural environment is inadequate; they require “an enclosure which has the same origin as themselves, i.e. which is likewise the product of imagination and has been formed by artistic activity” (*Ä:II*, 297/655). “Only in surroundings produced by art,” he concludes, “do the gods find their appropriate element” (*Ä:II*, 297/655). The divine, created by human art, requires artistic surroundings as well.

Architecture achieves this transition by combining the pragmatic need for the non-natural and mathematical— “the straight line, the right angle, level surfaces” necessary to make the building stand—with continued reference to the natural. On the one hand, this transition is a demotion: it “divests architecture of its independence and degrades it to providing an artistically formed inorganic environment for the spiritual meanings that for their part have now been independently realized” (*Ä:II*, 271/634). On the other hand, where the two extremes of mathematical regularity and organic forms “meet and mutually interpenetrate, really beautiful classical architecture is born” (*Ä:II*, 298/656).

This merging of need and nature, the organic and the mathematical, is most obvious in columns. Columns are load-bearing: they require “a mechanical relation” and belong “to the province of gravity and its laws” (*Ä:II*, 299/657).[18] Early columns were made to resemble natural forms such as humans or trees. But with the "column proper," architecture "leaves the purely organic to enter the sphere of geometrically ordered purposiveness" (*Ä:II*, 302/659). It does not, however, reduce these columns entirely to pragmatic support: instead of stanchions that begin bluntly at the floor and end at the ceiling, it integrates the natural distinctions of a human "foot and head" or a plant's "root and corolla" (*Ä:II*, 297/656). Architecture that has reached its perfection excludes neither mathematics nor nature but is "the unity of these two principles" (*Ä:II*, 302/659).

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[18] Compare Hegel’s discussion of columns at A20, 149–152; H23, 209–210; K26, 311–316; and Hm28, 88–90. On the role of gravity in Hegel’s definition of architecture, see Kolb (2007), 83–84, 92–83.

Once architecture has perfected this kind of column, it transitions fully into its classical stage. It becomes "an inorganic surrounding structure, a whole built and ordered according to the laws of gravity" (*Ä:II*, 302/660). As a structure explicitly meant for housing, it is "subject to what is severely regular, rectilinear, right-angled, circular, to relations depending on specific number and quantity, to inherently limited proportions and fixed conformity to law" (*Ä:II*, 303/660). Classical architecture is beautiful, Hegel says, because it is "freed from immediate confusion with the organic, the spiritual, and the symbolic; although it subserves a purpose, it comprises a perfect totality in itself which makes its one purpose shine clearly through all its forms, and in the music of its proportions reshapes the purely useful into beauty" (*Ä:II*, 303/660).[19] Classical architecture remains true to its principle: it allows inorganic matter to remain inorganic and non-spiritual by emphasizing its own subjection to the laws of gravity while housing the explicitly spiritual individuality of sculpture. Architecture's need to house the spiritual "now becomes what rules, what dominates the entire work, and determines its fundamental shape" (*Ä:II*, 304/661).

What then must the architect do to ensure that this housing of the spiritual is obvious? Hegel first considers what kind of materials will best achieve this effect. Wood, on the one hand, is most appropriate for architecture's purposes insofar as the tree almost of itself provides "stanchions and beams, because wood has already in itself a definite formation." Stone, on the other hand, is "a formless mass" that requires substantial effort just to bring it to "the shape and utility that wood has in and by itself from the start" (*Ä:II*, 308/664–665). Stone thus most easily lends itself both to the fantastical shapes of symbolic structures and the fanciful nature of romantic architecture. Despite the fact that classical architecture's need for definite angles and mathematical proportions would be most easily achieved in wood, classical architecture proceeds on the contrary to build with stone, working it into a form that resembles wood's natural shape and proportions "with the result that while in its architectural forms the original principle of building in wood is still always recognizable, specific characteristics nevertheless enter which are not inherent in building in wood as such" (*Ä:II*, 309/665). Stone carved into wood-like symmetry, in other words, provides the right combination of natural and mathematical.

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[19] Schelling, too, associated architecture's proportions with music, going so far as to call architecture "concrete music." See Schelling (1989), §107.

Next Hegel considers how the temple should display the load-bearing structures that define its functional essence. Here again columns are essential. Classical columns "should have the look of being there for a purpose and therefore should be neither too weak nor too strong" (*Ä:II*, 310/666). They should not be simple stanchions placed between floor and ceiling, exhibiting only a "negative limitation imposed by something else" (*Ä:II*, 310/666). They should instead define their own space and exhibit their particular function by emerging from a pedestal and culminating in a capital. "By this means," Hegel says, art intends "to say to us: 'here the column begins'" and so to draw our attention to the "solidity and safety of the structure" (*Ä:II*, 311/668). Columns' purpose is further expressed by the entablatures that they support which, by meeting the columns at a right angle, make the "secure and adequate" angles that obey the laws of gravity visible. Hegel goes through each part of the classical temple—friezes, cornices, walls, the relation of walls to columns—describing how each must be made in order to bring out the combination of purposiveness and beauty that characterizes Greek architecture (see Figure 6.1).

The classical temple, then, has to exhibit its intentional purposiveness through each of its parts. But—returning to the general characteristics necessary to art as described in Chapter 1—it is equally necessary that these parts be united into a whole. Columns, entablatures, and cornices must work together to ensure there is no

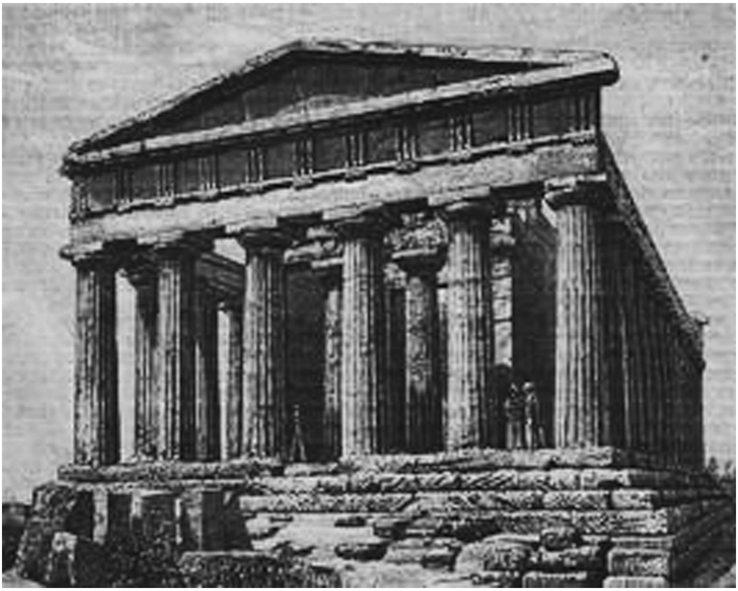

Figure 6.1 *Temple of Concordia, Valley of the Temples*, Agrigento, Sicily. Woodcut from Le Cento citta d'Italia, illustrated monthly supplement of *Il Secolo*, Milan, 1892.

upward emphasis: "the height is drawn rather from man's height" (*Ä:II*, 319/674). The colonnades and porticoes must be arranged such that we "get only the idea of people staying there cheerfully, without serious purpose, idly, and just chatting": an impression of "simplicity and grandeur, but at the same time of cheerfulness, openness, and comfort" (*Ä:II*, 321/676). The whole building, in short, embodies the harmony and ease familiar from classical art: the form of the classical temple perfectly correlates to the noble peacefulness of the classical ideal. Even the height and diameter of Doric, Ionian, and Corinthian columns contribute in different ways to conveying this impression. Doric columns are heavier, evoking "firmness and solidity" while also coming closest to resembling wood. Ionic capitals gain "in variety and grace" and are less wood-like. The Corinthian style exhibits a "tasteful brilliance and reveals the final wealth of decoration and ornament" (*Ä:II*, 326/680).

With Roman developments in architectural technology, however, the perfection of classical sculpture begins to decline. New structural feats such as vaulted roofs built on arches mean that columns lose their central position: the arch "is related to a central point which has nothing to do with a column and its support" (*Ä:II*, 328/681). Roman architects exhibited their skill "in the mechanics of building" and so constructed buildings that were "richer and more magnificent" but had less "nobility and grace" (*Ä:II*, 329/682). With these changes in skill come changes in function and style: temples are superseded by "villas, baths, avenues, stairs" built "with extreme luxury at enormous expense" (*Ä:II*, 329/683). The era of architecture displaying its simple purposiveness and its dependent status comes to an end.

5. The End and Future of Architecture: The Romantic

As we have already seen in Chapter 4, the romantic era has a vexed relation to art. It is characterized by the birth and spread of Christianity, which claims a historical basis of religion and the presence of the divine in every believer. It is a worldview that requires no artistic representation; architecture's role in this new world, like the role of all arts, is thus circumscribed. Insofar as art nevertheless continues, it must express a content that is by its nature difficult to express sensuously. Hegel's sections on romantic architecture trace how these challenges play out in architecture specifically.

Hegel's discussion of romantic architecture focuses on the gothic, which he calls the "real center of the properly romantic style" (*Ä:II*, 330/684).[20] The fact that Hegel is able to take the gothic seriously as a period within architecture is due in part to Goethe's 1772 essay "On German Architecture," written at the height of Goethe's *Sturm und*

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[20] Compare A20, 152–153; H23, 211–213; K26, 316–317; and Hm28, 90–92.

Drang period. There Goethe passionately argued for the Strasbourg Cathedral as eliciting an authentic aesthetic experience as opposed to the French rational, neo-classical style and for privileging three-dimensional art over the more representational art of painting.[21] In 1803, Friedrich Schlegel composed "Principles of Gothic Architecture" during his travels through parts of Europe and there also argued that the gothic should take its place alongside classical architecture. Schinkel, too, in his early career championed gothic architecture as a way to resist French domination and build a German national aesthetic.[22]

But in Hegel's case, the gothic as architecture's third form is determined by the conceptual development of art. Hegel's guiding question for architecture has concerned the interplay between independence and dependence, functionality and non-functionality. Symbolic architecture was independent and non-functional; classical architecture was dependent, functional, and constructed so as to emphasize this functionality. Romantic architecture will instead be functional but hide its functionality, making it appear independent and, again, almost sculptural. Gothic architecture, and specifically cathedrals of the thirteenth century, gives on Hegel's view the clearest example of this last conceptual possibility.

Gothic cathedrals retain the functionality achieved in Greek temples. Unlike the colossal figures of symbolic architecture, they give the religious community a space in which to worship. But unlike the Greek temples that announced their purpose by calling attention to load-bearing columns, gothic churches such as the Cologne cathedral

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[21] For a fascinating discussion of this piece as well as Goethe's 1795 "On Architecture," see Mücke (2009). Goethe, by Mücke's description, did much to elevate the architect from being seen as a mere builder by claiming that "the architect as true artist and genius finds the form of his work by allowing himself to be inspired by the confusing, seemingly infinite multiplicity of forms in nature; that is, by a manifold of natural forms that appears confusing but has its own harmonic order and design." See ibid., 10.

[22] On Schlegel, see Klein (2009), 30. In his later career, Schinkel turned more toward a classical aesthetic, as evidenced by several of his buildings in Berlin's center, most notably the *Altes Museum* (1830): see Saure (2013), 218–219. Saure also claims that Schinkel was influenced by Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* at ibid., 216–217. Both Saure and Geary connect Schinkel's classicism to a common belief in a privileged relationship between Greece and Germany. See Geary (2014), 23; Saure (2013), 215.

(which Hegel calls the point at which gothic architecture "blossomed most beautifully") seem to "transcend any specific end and, as perfect in themselves, stand there on their own account" (*Ä:II*, 331/684). However necessary their arches and columns are to the cathedral's purpose, that purpose "disappears again and the whole is given the look of an independent existent" (*Ä:II*, 331/685). Although it is clearly meant to house spiritual meaning, in the gothic cathedral's "grandeur and sublime peace [the building] is lifted above anything purely utilitarian into an infinity in itself" (*Ä:II*, 331/685).

This shift away from emphasizing the physical laws of gravity and proportion corresponds to Christianity's message. The fact that gothic churches are completely enclosed corresponds to the interiority of the Christian experience. Other gothic characteristics express the Christian worldview as well. Instead of the "cheerful openness of the Greek temple," the gothic cathedral is "shut in upon itself" (*Ä:II*, 332/686). Its stained-glass windows reduce and filter light, facilitating complete isolation from the outside world. "What people need here," Hegel says, "is not provided by the world of nature; on the contrary they need a world made by and for man alone" (*Ä:II*, 333/686). Gothic columns do not emphasize resting and supporting and so do not draw attention to laws of gravity; instead, walls seem to "shoot upwards on their own account" and "meet at a point without the fixed and express difference between a load and its support" (*Ä:II*, 334/686). The pillars are not even really distinguishable from the arches above them: the "arches seem to be a mere continuation of the pillars and rise to a point as it were unintentionally" (*Ä:II*, 336/689). The absence of an emphasis on gravity makes cathedrals appear, as Hebing puts it, like "gigantic sculptures."[23] (See Figure 6.2.)

Gothic interiors also embody Christianity's reunion of human and divine by exhibiting "a reconciliation of differences into a single unity that has become inherently concrete" (*Ä:II*, 335/687). They are not a uniform shape but a jumble of different lengths, breadths, and heights. The interior arrangement of the gothic cathedral also unites differences both functional and aesthetic among the chancel, transepts, and nave.

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[23] Hebing (2016), 135.

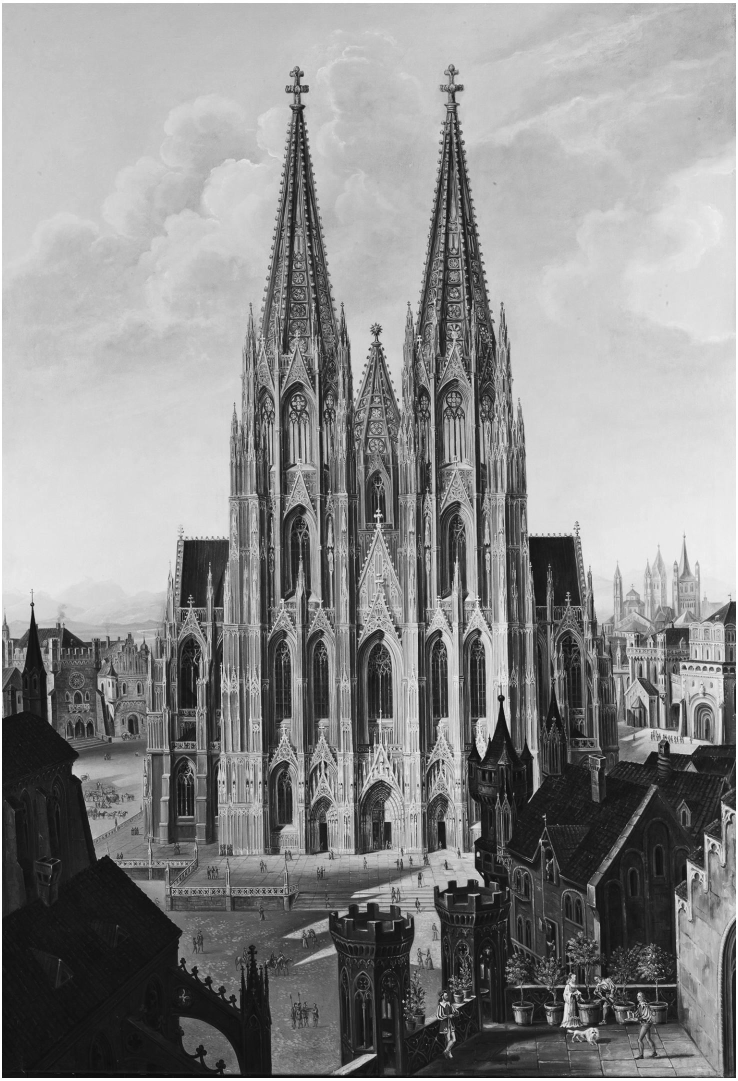

Figure 6.2 Artist unknown. View of the west facade of the Cologne Cathedral, 1839.

The high altar is visible from all angles and distinct from the other areas; the baptismal font and private chapels are also spatially and functionally distinct. This variety of spaces allows for a wide range of activities: "Here there is a sermon: there a sick man is brought in. Between the two a procession drags slowly on. Here there is a baptism, there a bier." Nothing, Hegel says,

> fills [the building] entirely, everything passes quickly; individuals and their doings are lost and dispersed like points in this grandiose structure; the momentary event is visible only in its passing away; and over everything these infinite spaces, these gigantic constructions, rise in their firm structure and immutable form. (*Ä:II*, 341/692)

The formation of the exterior, too, uses its cruciform shape, buttresses, and pinnacles to evoke unified variety, culminating in towers in which "the whole mass of the building is as were concentrated" (*Ä:II*, 343/695). In the midst of its nature-defying spaces, gothic churches return in some measure to the organic, including plants, animals, and human forms in their decorative detail, thus completing the eclectic unity.

Having identified the gothic cathedral as fulfilling the third dialectical combination of function and non-function, Hegel appears to have very little more to say about architecture. After a cursory analysis of Romanesque basilicas and the fortresses and strongholds of the Middle Ages, however, Hegel turns, "by way of appendix," to the "art of horticulture" or *Gartenbaukunst*.[24] As with his analysis of early architecture in sculptural terms, we might wonder at Hegel's willingness to collect seemingly non-architectural things under the idea of architecture. Surely gardens are not buildings and so do not fulfill architecture's basic definition. But Hegel points out that parks such as Frederick the Great's Sans Souci in Potsdam create an environment in which humans reshape the natural landscape, "*treating it architecturally* as an environment for buildings" (*Ä:II*, 349/699, italics mine). Just as the arrangement of colossal figures in ancient Egypt created a feeling of structured space, here trees and flowerbeds are arranged architecturally, tracing out space and distance.

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[24] The best sourcing for this discussion is A20, 153–154; see also Hegel's very brief comments at H23, 213 and K26, 321.

Within the art of horticulture, Hegel makes further distinctions. A park (*das Parkartige*) is not architectural but painting-like (*Malerische*): it is "not a building constructed out of free natural objects" but instead "a painting (*ein Malen*) which leaves these objects as they naturally are and tries to imitate nature in its greatness and freedom" (*Ä:II*, 349/699).[25] Like a painting, a park synthesizes aspects of landscape such as crags, waterfalls, and lakes. By contrast, Hegel is unimpressed by parks that are "rigged out with Chinese pagodas, Turkish mosques, Swiss chalets, bridges, hermitages, and goodness knows what other curiosities" (*Ä:II*, 350/699). These things can amuse us only once; they then become wearisome. Parks should instead provide "for diversion and the pleasure of strolling, a place which is no longer nature as such but nature transformed by man to meet his need for an environment created by himself" (*Ä:II*, 350/699).

Gardens, by contrast, should be architectural: a "garden as such (*ein Garten als solcher*) should provide no more than cheerful surroundings . . . worth nothing in themselves and so never distracting us from human affairs and our inner life" (*Ä:II*, 350/700). This is apparently best achieved when nature is treated architecturally, when "order, regularity and symmetry" are employed to present "natural objects themselves architecturally" (*Ä:II*, 350/700). In an apparent reference to his visit to Versailles, Hegel concludes that when executed successfully, gardens ensure that "nature itself is transformed into a vast residence under the open sky" (*Ä:II*, 350/700). The idea of architecture as essentially a *building* constructed to house the spiritual has produced something like its dialectical opposite: instead of being characterized by a building, it is now an open space that shelters nothing but creates the feeling of a building and, somehow, still houses the spiritual. With this image, Hegel's analysis of architecture ends.

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[25] Hegel is not the only philosopher to assign a seemingly counter-intuitive position to gardening: Kant divides painting into painting proper and "pleasure gardens" which give "only the illusion of employment and use for ends other than merely the play of the imagination in the viewing of its forms." The "beautiful arrangement of gardens" is "given only for the eye, like painting" (Kant 1990, §51).

Hegel's silence regarding other instances of architecture is striking. He does not discuss castles, palaces, or the baroque; he does not comment on the surge in new architecture happening around him in Berlin. He does not, as others did, express concern about the social atomization evident in the architecture of industrialism or comment on the relative importance of foreign versus native architecture on national identity.[26] But Hegel, we remember, announced early in his lectures his intention to confine himself generally to art's conceptual development, and architecture's conceptual development ends with the paradigmatic gothic cathedral. Architecture's essence is defined by the relation of dependence and independence, or function and non-function. In symbolic architecture, we found complete independence: the Tower of Bel had no function aside from its expression of a certain spirituality. Classical architecture was functional in the sense that it housed the divine; it highlighted that function by making the support of its columns, and the angles necessary to provide support, obvious. Romantic architecture indeed is functional—it houses the religious community—but it hides its functionality by masking the physics necessary to support its vaulting grandeur. After this point, no further combination of dependence and independence is conceptually possible. Architecture has reached its conceptual end.

But just as the conceptual end of particular art forms did not mean that there could be no further art, the conceptual end of architecture does not imply that no further developments *within* the romantic architectural viewpoint are possible. It instead means that architecture should continue to express romantic interiority by finding new ways to be functional while also transcending that functionality. It should, then, be judged according to its ability to achieve this combination. In contrast to Hegel's otherwise consistent praise of Protestantism, for instance, he has nothing good to say about its churches. The "box-like" interiors of "our Protestant churches," he complains, are built "only to be filled by a congregation and have nothing but pews like stalls in a stable" (*Ä:II*, 331/684). Their purpose is too clear for them to fulfil romantic architecture's characteristic undermining of its own purposiveness. This, to me, is clear evidence that Hegel in Part III is not only evaluating worldviews and the extent to which art expresses them. An austere Protestant faith may be superior in Hegel's view, and it may indeed be best expressed by such unadorned spaces. But they do not make good art.

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[26] Compare Saure's account of Schinkel at Saure (2013), 210–212.

More successful examples are imaginable. Hebing has recently argued for the spiritual importance of Hegel's description of gardens, suggesting that they provide new architecture-like spaces in which the romantic worldview's increasing secularity can find expression. In a natural space that both shows and hides human purposiveness, humans can contemplate the spiritual nature of their own activities and their own spirituality: as concerns *this* spiritual habitation, as Hebing puts it, "God moves out, the human moves in."[27] Modern civic buildings can also combine dependence and independence by providing a space for secular meaning-creation while drawing our attention beyond their physical functionality to their function "for the political whole."[28] The quick construction of Schinkel's several museums in buildings near the university where Hegel taught might offer another example of late romanticism's human spirituality: museums—in a dialectical move that Hegel would have appreciated—house artworks, themselves human creations that express spirituality.[29] And indeed, contemporary museums by Gehry or Libeskind, to take two obvious examples, sometimes function like the temples of modern humanism, and the movement to the sacred in a secular space may be exactly what later romanticism requires. Insofar as those buildings serve the purpose of housing art while also transcending that purpose through their aesthetic form, they can be assessed as romantic architecture. Modern skylines, to take another example, teem with architecture that serves a function—as a music hall, a skyscraper, a place of worship—but that also sometimes seems to defy architectural principles and become, as it were, sculptural.[30] Insofar as that is the case, modern architecture is assessable by Hegel's standards as well.

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[27] Hebing (2016), 140.

[28] Ibid., 141.

[29] For speculation on why Hegel does not discuss these buildings, see Dilly (1986).

[30] Rush suggests that in this and other transitions between individual art forms, there is a kind of "metaphysical variant of the idea of '*ekphrasis*' or the practice of converting

6. Architecture and Idealism

A few points remain to emphasize at the end of architecture's development. One is its role in making Hegel's idealist claims about our mutual formation with the world available to the senses. It is worth pausing here to articulate what architecture—and, by extension, all individual arts—suggests about the nature of the world and humans' part in it. Hegel rejects Kant's subjective idealism and with it the suggestion of a noumenal realm independent of the space and time that humans impose on the world. But on Houlgate's reading, he does claim that the conversion of sensation into objects that are explicitly conceptualized as separate from the subject is a matter of human activity. As Houlgate says: "no sensation, in Hegel's view, brings with it a clear awareness that we stand in relation to something separate from ourselves": we are aware of sensations, but "there being an independent object—for example, a tree—over there is not given. The content we receive in sensation must thus be set over there in thought in order for us to be conscious that what we see and feel is a 'tree.'"[31]

Humans, in other words, as the thinking part of the true that is the whole, use the concepts generated by thought's own development to articulate the spatio-temporal entities that they sense *as spatio-temporal* and, as outlined in Hegel's *Logic*, then to classify them under other categories such as causality. The object is not *an object* until there is a self that sees it as such: sees itself as a separate entity and—in the literal sense of the German word for object—*Gegenstand*—the object as standing against it. In this sense, objecthood is a status conferred by the subject, but not in the sense that the subject calls spatio-temporal reality into being. Consciousness itself just *is*, in one sense, exactly the capacity to confer this status: it "differs from mere sensory awareness

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one artistic form into another" (Rush 2018, 163). Pippin similarly claims that painting, to take a later example, is "better at what sculpture is committed to doing, even as music, in some sense or other, does better what painting attempts" (Pippin 2018, 211). I think both these assessments are generally right and—as we will see in the following chapters—borne out by Hegel's description of transitions from bas reliefs to painting, painting to music, and music to poetry.

[31] Houlgate (2006), 243, 244. Houlgate offers this conception of Hegel's metaphysics as a contrast to McDowell's.

in being the activity of understanding what is sensed to form a realm of *independent objects*."[32]

On this reading, humans are the part of the true that is the whole that can sense space *as space* and so conceive of objects *as spatial*. We are also able to conceptualize laws of gravity, symmetry, and proportion: forces and measurements that are not our creation but that we conceptualize as such. In bringing our attention to these concepts that we contribute to the world, architecture allows us to perceive our creative participation in the true that is the whole. Functional architecture also allows us to differentiate inner from outer and exterior from interior in a way, as Hebing points out, familiar from the self's journey in Subjective Spirit's "Anthropology" to self-knowledge through a differentiation of one's inner life from the world around it.[33] Insofar as architecture brings us to reflect on natural laws, spatial differences, or inner from outer, and does so in a way that can make us aware of our role in creating these distinctions, it allows us to sense the Idea. As Hegel will argue more explicitly in his discussion of subsequent individual arts, the pleasure art gives us is in some sense the pleasure of sensing this truth. In my view, Houlgate's account of this kind of mutual formation will be validated by these discussions.

Secondly, we are now in a position to understand better how this ability to conceptualize the world's spatial extension and to differentiate inner from outer also figures in the unity of unity and division that characterizes all of Hegel's system. Architecture is the part of the differentiated whole that remains "other" to spirit. As Kolb says, if architecture were to be permeated with self-embodied meaning as is music or poetry, something would be lost to spirit's self-awareness. Architecture's task, he continues, "is to deal with heavy external matter *as such*, showing it forth in its foundational role as support and surrounding for spirit's activities. If spirit is to find itself fully, not only the unity of meaning and matter but also the recalcitrance of the material world and its difference from spiritual meaning must be posited artistically."[34] Architecture is, in this sense, the symbol of the external: it stands in for its inclusion in art's sensuous expression of the Idea.

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[32] Ibid., 243.

[33] Hebing (2016), 127.

Thirdly, architecture's trajectory helps us understand its symbolic essence and why Hegel divides architecture into worldviews despite the fact that its discussion falls in Part III. The symbolic, we remember from Chapter 2, must achieve a delicate balance of correlation and difference. A symbol that has nothing to do with the thing symbolized will fail, as will a symbol that maintains no distance from the thing symbolized. In its classical and romantic phases, architecture successfully mirrored the spiritual content in question—in the case of the classical by blending intelligence and nature, and in the case of the romantic by suggesting interiority. But architecture still cannot embody them fully and so remains symbolic. Nevertheless, among the three kinds of architecture, the classical is, in one sense, most successful. The symbolic worldview remains vague and undefined; even when architecture attempts to symbolize its meaning, it can only be partially successful since it is not clear what it should symbolize. The classical worldview, by contrast, has a well-developed, conscious understanding of its spiritual meaning. In addition, it isolates the ideal way to symbolize this meaning by maintaining a difference between the spiritual and the physical: Greek temples were not spiritual themselves but perfectly housed the spiritual. The romantic worldview, by contrast, as Kolb puts it, "weakens the harmony" between inner and outer achieved by the classical worldview since the inner life, which resists sensuous representation, becomes dominant. Here we see another point at which the different trajectories of Hegel's analyses of art intersect in surprising ways.[35] All architecture is symbolic, but classical architecture is most perfectly symbolic. The meaning romantic architecture seeks to symbolize, by contrast, is closer to Hegel's conception of truth than is the meaning of classical architecture, but this closer proximity to truth makes romantic architecture less successful at the symbolism that characterizes all architecture. Architecture thus expresses in miniature a familiar theme from art's general development: the closer we come to true content, the less architecture in particular and art in general can capture it. But in each case, its symbolic essence means it must symbolize a particular worldview, necessitating its affiliation with the symbolic, classical, and romantic as *forms* of art.

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[34] Kolb (2007), 49, 30.

[35] I would therefore qualify Kaminsky's claim that "[w]ith the arrival of the Romantic stage of art, architecture evolved to its highest point" (Kaminsky 1962, 58), as well as Parrish's claim that architecture "achieves its apex in the romantic stage" (Parrish 2014, 278). For other characterizations of these three stages, see Kolb (2007), 43 and Hebing (2016), 136.

Finally, architecture's development toward housing the human as a spiritual individual is a truth that will survive into sculpture and beyond. Architecture's essence means that it must house the divine and the divine must take the form of an individual. In the following chapter, we will see Hegel argue that the only physical form the spiritual can take is human individuality. Architecture prepares the way for what we learn about Hegel's idealism in his discussion of sculpture, specifically regarding the interpenetration of nature and spirit that humans represent.

Following architecture's development to its conceptual end takes us far afield from the individual arts' general trajectory as articulated at the beginning of this chapter, namely from architecture's externality to sculpture's individuality to the romantic arts' subjectivity. The development of the individual arts in fact picks up at the point where representations of the divine become intensely individual and so require the housing that brings architecture to its own dependent, functional essence. Art's trajectory continues, in other words, with the classical sculptures that perfectly embody the individuality that emerges from architecture's externality. To put it another way: having attended to the housing for the spiritual, Hegel turns his attention to the spiritual objects housed.

7

Individuality Embodied

Sculpture

"[A]long this road of spirit's return into itself out of matter and mass," Hegel says, we "encounter sculpture" (*Ä:II*, 351/701). Art's trajectory began with the inorganic, heavy externality of architecture; it will continue past sculpture to the moods, passions, and actions of subjectivity. Architecture's essence involved allowing unspiritual matter to remain unspiritual. Sculpture instead intentionally shapes heavy, inorganic matter into something that expresses spirit: it embodies spirit, showing how matter can take spiritual form. In doing so, sculpture captures "spiritual *individuality*"—the perfect interpenetration of architecture's unspiritual matter and the self-consciousness of subjectivity.[1] Hegel's intention in his discussion of sculpture is to articulate when and how sculpture most perfectly achieved this individuality and so achieved "the miracle of spirit's giving itself an image of itself in something purely material" (*Ä:II*, 362/710).

Some of Hegel's discussion of sculpture overlaps with his analysis of the stage of art's development in which sculpture thrived, namely the classical age. But there are several key differences. First, as always, Hegel is determined to arrive at sculpture's definition not by generalizing up from examples but by finding its necessary place within his system. Classical art was defined as the adequate expression of an inadequate understanding of truth, as opposed to symbolic art's inadequate expression of inadequate truth and romantic art's inadequate expression of adequate truth. Sculpture, as the art that expresses individuality, is instead defined by its position between architecture's inorganic, external essence on the one hand and the subjective essence of painting, music, and poetry on the other.

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[1] See also Hegel's claim that sculpture's "fundamental principle" is human individuality (*Ä:II*, 437/771). Compare H23, 213.

Hegel's emphasis here will consequently fall on how sculpture's physicality—its extension in space, its interaction with shadow, its materials—enables it to achieve the principle of individuality. Sculpture, like architecture, is about the determination of space but, unlike architecture, space *as embodied shape*. Although, as a physical object, it is subject to the same laws of gravity as architecture—both arts use "heavy matter in its spatial entirety"—sculpture "withdraws out of the inorganic, which architecture, bound as it is to the laws of gravity, labors to bring nearer to an expression of spirit" and instead, by portraying a body, embodies the organic (*Ä:II*, 351/701).

These facts about sculpture determine the questions that define this chapter. When does sculpture achieve the pinnacle of what is sculptural about sculpture?[2] What sculpted forms will best transmit sculpture's ideal? What should a sculpted god's eyes look like? Should sculptures be nude? Given that architecture has evolved to provide housing for sculptures of the divine, where within temples should these sculptures be located? Which among sculpture's possible materials—wood, bronze, marble, and so forth—will allow sculpture to achieve its essence most fully? Sculpture's essential characteristics also determine the ways in which sculpture—again as distinct from classical art—will end.

Through much of art's history, painting had been elevated over sculpture since vision had been valued over touch. Eighteenth-century empiricists had shifted this discourse by pointing out vision's artificial reduction of surfaces to planes and its fundamentally illusory nature as opposed to the concrete reality of the tactile. Still, that sculpture was its own art form could, shortly before Hegel's lifetime, not be taken for granted. Herder had, for instance, found it necessary to argue against Lessing that sculpture should be distinguished from painting.[3] In *Sculpture: Some Observations on Form and Shape from*

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[2] Houlgate gives an excellent overview of these questions at Houlgate (2007a).

[3] See Guyer (2014), 383, 392ff. and Lichtenstein (2008), 71–72. Lichtenstein emphasizes that Herder was trying to derive fundamental principles for these two arts in the same way Lessing had done for literature and the visual arts in his essay on *Laocöon.*

Pygmailon's Creative Dream, Herder complains that "[p]ainting and sculpture are always confused with one another; they are placed under a *single* sense, under a *single* organ of the soul, which is supposed to register and to create the same beauty in both." "I confess that I understand but little of this," he continues: "I have closely considered both art forms and have found that no *single* law, no observation, no effect of the one fits the other without some difference or delimitation." Herder ultimately privileges sculpture over painting precisely because of its non-illusory nature: "sculpture is truth, whereas painting is a *dream*."[4]

Nevertheless, Friedrich Schlegel still wrote in 1799 that the difference between sculpture and architecture was only a matter of degree.[5] But arguments such as Herder's, combined with Winckelmann's influential descriptions of ancient sculpture's surpassing beauty, meant that by the time Hegel was lecturing, it was not unusual to treat sculpture as an independent art. Hegel's reasons for doing so are, predictably, systematic, having to do again with sculpture's individuality as positioned between architecture's externality and the other arts' subjectivity. Hegel's pursuit of sculpture's essence unfolds in three stages: first, he determines "the essential nature" of sculpture's content and form; second, he specifies how sculpture can best achieve that essence; and finally, he discusses its history.

1. The Principle of Sculpture Proper

Since sculpture is to be the thing housed rather than the housing, it must be some kind of body. In Hegel's view, the only body in which the divine can fully show itself is the human body. The human body is natural, but not "merely natural": "in its shape and structure [it] has declared itself as likewise the sensuous and natural existence of the spirit" (*Ä:II*, 368/715).[6] For all the reasons discussed in classical art—our recessed eyes, upright posture, facial expressions, emotional gestures—the human form can house the spiritual. In this way, Hegel arrives at sculptures of the human body as paradigmatic of sculpture in general just as they were the pinnacle of classical art. But his reasoning here is, again, different. In classical art, the approach was from spirit's attempt to emerge from nature, apparent in the sphinx. Here it is from spirit's transition from being housed to being embodied. And since this sculpted body appears in a temple, it is not just the human body but the human body as divine. Sculpture's principle, to repeat, is individuality: more particularly, the individual human body.

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[4] Herder (1994), 256, 259; translated at Herder (2000), 769–771. Mücke suggests that Herder did for sculpture what Goethe did for architecture in advocating for an "aesthetics of emphatic presence" that privileges three-dimensional arts. See Mücke (2009), 18.

[5] Schlegel (1957), 160. Schelling, like Kant, groups sculpture with architecture as a "plastic art"; Hegel does the same in 1820 and 1823. Compare Schelling (1989), §§106–107 and Kant (1990), §51.

But the fact that the divine must be portrayed in a human body does not mean that it should take on the full range of human characteristics. Sculpture's immobile three-dimensionality means it remains abstract: "no particularization is employed for artistic use except the three universal spatial dimensions and the elementary spatial forms which those dimensions are capable of receiving" (*Ä:II*, 362/710). This means that the "most suitable subject for sculpture is the peaceful and substantive immersion of character in itself" (*Ä:III*, 16/797). No doubt influenced by Winckelmann's description of the peaceful nobility of Greek sculptures, Hegel says that paradigmatic sculpture shows spirit "in its self-repose," or the stage at which the spiritual and the physical are perfectly balanced and spirit "has not withdrawn into the self-awareness of its own subjectivity" (*Ä:II*, 362/710).[7] Sculpture can thus present the divine as peaceful as long as it excludes whatever would shift our attention to the particular. It must therefore exclude facial expressions that would show responsiveness to particular situations in the world or any kind of interior emotion. Only so can sculpture implant "in a human figure the spiritual substance in its *not yet subjectively particularized individuality*" (*Ä:II*, 372/718, italics mine).

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[6] For Schelling's argument as to why the human form, as opposed to animal or plant forms, is the appropriate form for sculpture, see Schelling (1989), §123. Schelling also writes that "[t]he human figure is in and for itself already an image of the universe, which possesses its space within itself and has none external to it" (ibid., §122) and that consummate sculpture "is also the perfected informing of the infinite into the finite" (ibid., §125). The similarities to Hegel's account are, again, striking.

[7] Winckelmann writes: "What generally characterizes the excellence of Greek masterpieces is finally a noble simplicity and a calm greatness, both in the pose and in the expression." Further: "The more restful the position of the body is, the more suitable it is for depicting the true character of the soul. In all poses that diverge too much from a position of restfulness, the soul is not in a condition that is true to itself" (Winckelmann 2013, 42–43).

Remaining free from the "accidents of personality" means that sculpture expresses perfect self-enclosed independence. Sculpted gods should hover "in the very middle between pure universality and equally abstract particularity" (*Ä:II*, 82/482): Hegel writes that sculpture gives to its works "a self-enclosed objectivity alike in content and in external appearance. Its content is the individually animated but independently self-reposing substance of the spirit, while its form is a three-dimensional figure" (*Ä:III*, 153/905). This three-dimensionality means that the sculpture does not depend on the viewer to exist, as will be the case with the romantic arts. While painting must be viewed from a certain angle to have its effect, sculpture can be viewed from many angles. For all of these reasons, Hegel claims, "sculpture has the maximum of independence" (*Ä:III*, 153/905).

It is exactly by limiting itself in this way that classical sculpture achieves the pinnacle of art: it most perfectly makes the Idea appear to the senses. "[M]ore than any other art," Hegel says, such sculpture "always points particularly to the Ideal."[8] The Ideal, we remember, is the Idea in determinate form: the unity of unity and division, self-determination, embodied. Sculpture achieves this effect when it portrays the human body, which is the only body in which spirit can appear, as perfectly self-contained. Unlike, as we will see, painting and the other romantic arts, sculpture hints at nothing it cannot depict. It is perfectly suited to depict the abstract, three-dimensional body that expresses spirit, but it does not attempt to portray spirit's unrepresentable self-consciousness. Sculpture's "presentations are perfectly adequate to this content," as Hegel puts it, because it "still ignores the subjectivity of the inner life" (*Ä:II*, 373/718). Architecture points beyond itself, as do the romantic arts. Sculpture alone is "self-meaning form" (Hm28, 82).

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[8] See also A20, 156, Hm28, 93: "Die Skulptur ist überhaupt auf das Ideale angewisesen."

As with both classical art and classical architecture, Hegel again follows Winckelmann in claiming that this peaceful, harmonious self-expression perfectly matched the realities of classical Greek life. Ancient Greeks existed at a stage at which spirit had not yet retreated into self-conscious subjectivity. Humans were themselves, Hegel says, in a sense "plastic," by which he means sculptural: self-contained, serene, and at one with the ethical world around them. Specifically the actors, orators, and poets of the Periclean age are "individuals of a single cast, works of art standing there like immortal and deathless images of the gods" (*Ä:II*, 374/719). We will see Hegel refer to this plasticity again in his description of Greek tragedy in which actors behaved almost like statues: like embodied universals lacking all subjectivity.

2. Paradigmatic Sculpture: From Arrangement to Materials

How must sculpture be formed in order to achieve its ideal? Hegel's specifications are all targeted at ensuring that individuality as sculpture's principle is protected: that spirit is embodied in its self-repose and that no subjectivity peeks through. Now that we know what sculpture's principle is, in other words, we have to show how it is actualized in particular sculptures.

Although, as we have seen, Hegel considers fifth-century BCE sculptures such as Athena Parthenos or the Olympian Zeus to be paradigmatic of sculptures in their moment of deepest repose (see again Figure 3.1), here Hegel chooses the Elgin marbles as providing a range of examples. In this magnificent wealth of sculptures, we frequently find a "solid severity" of style that "constitutes the real greatness and sublimity of the ideal" (*Ä:II*, 379/724). Most impressive is the "expression of independence, of self-repose in these figures," exhibited by their "free vivacity, by the way in which the natural material is

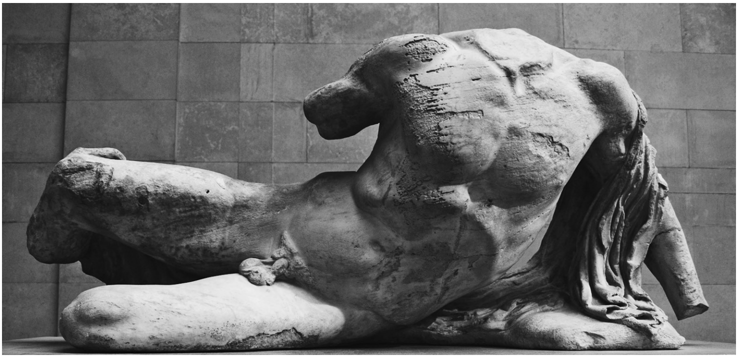

Figure 7.1 Phidias, Figure of a river-god, west pediment of the Parthenon, Athens, 438–432 BCE.

permeated and conquered by the spirit and in which the artist has softened the marble, animated it, and given it a soul" (*Ä:II*, 379/724). Especially marvelous is the "recumbent river-god which is amongst the most beautiful things preserved to us from antiquity" (see Figure 7.1) (*Ä:II*, 379/724).

The stunning effect of these sculptures is again the result of many components working in harmony. The sculptures' limbs are perfectly arranged so as to seem both still and animated. Despite sculpture's hard materials, the skin appears soft and elastic, and life glows through marble. "[O]rganic lines flow gently into one another," and the parts are devoid of "regular surfaces or anything merely circular or convex" (*Ä:II*, 381/726). All this makes the sculptures appear uncannily lifelike. We need not be aware of all the particular, perfect details for the overall structure to have its aesthetic effect on us, but those details are nevertheless necessary. Their achievement of a whole "eludes the categories of the Understanding which cannot grasp the particular here or get to the root of it" as it can by analyzing the mathematical proportions of architecture (*Ä:II*, 382/727). The sum here is greater than its parts.

Other characteristics contribute to this cumulative effect. Hegel suggests that not just any human profile will do; the Greek profile will bring out individuality best.[9] The mouth must be recessed so as to differentiate the human profile from the animal's snout: "if the human appearance in its bodily form is to bear an impress of spirit, then those organs which appear as the most important in the animal must be in the background in man" (*Ä:II*, 385/729). The sculpture's nose and mouth must therefore be aligned so as to indicate not "a practical relation to things but . . . an ideal or theoretical one" (*Ä:II*, 385/729). The human face also has a second center, the "intellectual brow," that must be emphasized.

But however exactly the artist embodies these components of the profile, he must stop at depicting the parts of the eye. This is for two reasons. First, the eye gives us the view of subjectivity, and sculpture must not attempt to depict subjectivity. Hegel acknowledges that it counts as a sacrifice on the part of the artist to leave the eyes vacant. But it is exactly this "clearest expression of a man's soul that sculpture must lack" (*Ä:II*, 389/732). Second, the eye "looks out into the external world" while the "genuine sculptural figure is precisely withdrawn from this link with external things," being instead "independent in itself" (*Ä:II*, 389/732–733). Hegel's extensive discussion of how other parts of the body—the ears, the hair, the chin—contribute to the achievement of the Ideal need not detain us here. But every bit of it signifies, as does the sculpted human's upright posture, the free form of the limbs that avoid "abstract regularity and angularity" and so approach "the form of the organic," showing again that the spirit is being viewed in natural form (*Ä:II*, 379/739).

All of this amounts to a difficult balance for sculpture to strike. It should not exclude movement altogether since then "it would portray the Divine only in its vagueness and absence of difference" (*Ä:II*, 401/741). On the other hand, the artist must beware of gestures that would betray intention or conflict and so introduce subjectivity. Sculptors must also clothe their figures appropriately. Since sculpture should focus our attention on the spiritual, digestive and reproductive organs should be covered. In another unexpected designation, Hegel follows Schelling in suggesting that the clothing should be “architectural,” providing a kind of housing for the spiritual.[10] Like the Greek temple, this clothing should provide “an environment in which we can nevertheless move freely” (*Ä:II*, 407/746); the Greek mantle, in other words, is “like a house in which a person is free to move” (*Ä:II*, 408/747). Modern clothes, by contrast, are too “subservient” to the body, tracking its every movement and too closely outlining what is beneath. Nevertheless, when modern subjects are sculpted, it should be in clothing of their own time. “If the whole life and circumstances of an individual are not ideal,” Hegel concludes, “neither should his clothing be” (*Ä:II*, 410/749).

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[9] The racial implications of this claim are unfortunately all too clear, and Hegel makes them explicit at H28, 96. For other sources on this discussion, see A20, 162–165; H23, 224–227; and K26, 333–336.

To return to the gods of ancient Greece: the fact that individuality should be portrayed without subjectivity does not mean sculptures should revert to a kind of generic universality. On the contrary, “the beauty of the ideal consists precisely in its not being a purely universal norm but in essentially having individuality and therefore particularity and character” (*Ä:II*, 413/751). Artists must therefore produce “external marks of recognition” such as clothing, weapons, individual build, and carriage. Hegel professes himself amazed by how Greek artists managed to convey the individuality of Zeus, Juno, and Athena all without lapsing into either the overly universal or overly particular. Each can be readily distinguished but not in a way that compromises their individual self-sufficiency.[11]

Sculpture’s effect could not be achieved without a similar kind of individuality in the artistic process. The classical artist himself balances universal and particular by borrowing from the traditional but giving it his own shape. The “universal element in the content is not the artist’s creation; it is given to him by mythology and tradition”;

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[10] Compare Schelling: “The architectonic part of sculpture, to the extent it takes place within sculpture in a subordinated fashion, is drapery or clothing” (Schelling 1989, §132).

[11] Rutter puts the human form’s appropriateness for sculpture this way: “Individuality is for Hegel the logical reconciliation of universality and particularity. A content that is pure universality—God, light—is nearly impossible to sculpt. One that is pure particularity—a bust of an ordinary Athenian—is not worth sculpting. . . . But Apollo’s divinity outstrips neither the corporeal form of sculpture (his godliness just is his physical perfection) nor its stillness (Apollo’s identity is not bound up with any particular story about his life)” (Rutter 2010, 88–89).

but the “free and living individualization which he gives to every part of his creation is the fruit of his own insight” (*Ä:II*, 380/725). Classical sculptors did not have to struggle to articulate a meaning as did their symbolic counterparts, but they were also free to do with their inherited meaning what they found best—a situation that echoes Hegel’s definition of freedom, found in his practical philosophy, as choosing to be limited by the needs of others. This synergy between art form and artist perhaps explains that for the ancient Greeks, sculpture was “not just a decoration but a living need . . . just as painting was to the Venetians in the days of their splendor” (*Ä:II*, 429/764). Only this confluence of factors can explain, given how difficult the physical act of sculpting is, the sheer number of statues Greek society produced.

Hegel then turns to materials. It should come as no surprise that he prefers material that exhibits the “objective character of consistency and permanence,” the better to express sculpture’s paradigmatic self-sufficiency and repose. That material is marble. Hegel acknowledges sculpture’s origins in wood and its flourishing in ivory, gold, and bronze. But marble, “in its soft purity, whiteness, absence of colour, and the delicacy of its sheen harmonizes in the most direct way with the aim of sculpture” (*Ä:II*, 443/776). Unlike the “chalk-like dead appearance of gypsum” which “easily kills the finer shadow-effects,” marble achieves a “gentle infusion of light” (*Ä:II*, 443/776). While bronze’s “malleability and fluidity” permits bronze to produce “a host of conceits, compliments, vessels, decorations, and graceful trivialities,” marble’s translucence allows light and shadow to interact in ways that bring out sculpture’s three-dimensional essence with particular clarity (*Ä:II*, 442/776).

Should sculptures be painted? Hegel acknowledges that in fact most in the ancient world were.[12] But he insists that if our goal is to understand sculpture’s essence and to take seriously what sculpture brings to our attention, we should abstract from color. An unpainted sculpture allows sculpture’s essence to shine through, allowing us to see its light and darkness only as a result of its position in space, unaffected by color.

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[12] On this debate and its consequences in the theories of Diderot, Falconet, and Winckelmann, see Lichtenstein (2008), 81–82.

3. The Historical Development of Sculpture

Hegel turns to considering, very briefly, sculpture's historical stages. His principal concern throughout has been to trace sculpture's conceptual development.[13] That development happened primarily in classical Greece, and its conclusion means sculpture has reached its conceptual end; art's general trajectory will now lead into painting. But Hegel also concedes that sculpture existed during both the predominantly symbolic period of ancient Egypt and Christianity's romantic period.

The first historical difference between symbolic and classical sculpture Hegel mentions concerns artists. As opposed to the freedom of Greek artists, who adopted eternal themes but imprinted them with their own originality, Egyptian artists were not given artistic license. This burdened Egyptian art with a rigid, inflexible essence that lacks "the grace and vivacity which result from the properly organic sweep of the lines" (*Ä:II*, 449/782). Hands and feet are rigid; arms are pressed against the body. This is not due to any defect in symbolic sculptors' skill but reflects the society's "original conception of what images of the gods and their deeply secret repose should be" (*Ä:II*, 450/782). Hegel lists several other characteristics supporting the general claim that here artists have "not yet overcome the breach between meaning and shape" that would allow them to embody individuality. "A higher sense of one's own individuality than the Egyptians possessed had to be awakened before there could be dissatisfaction with vagueness and superficiality in art" (*Ä:II*, 453/784).

Two transitional periods bridge Egyptian and classical sculpture. Aeginetan sculptures generally lack "*spiritual* animation" (*Ä:II*, 456/

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[13] Hegel gives the most attention to sculpture's history in the 1820 lectures where his discussion is actually concentrated at the beginning of the section. See A20, 156–164.

786); Etruscan works come close to portraits by showing the "posture and facial expression" to be free (*Ä:II*, 456/787). But only when tradition makes room for artistic freedom does the classical age proper begin. Artistic freedom of production "alone succeeds, on the one hand, in entirely working the universality of the meaning into the individuality of the shape, and, on the other, in raising the physical forms to the height of being a genuine expression of their spiritual meaning" (*Ä:II*, 456/787).

After the height of classical sculpture in ancient Greece, Hegel describes the historical dissolution of classical art in terms of the poetic versus the prosaic. Classical Greek sculpture included "the poetry of spiritual animation, the inner breath and nobility of a representation perfect in itself, these excellences peculiar to Greek plastic art" (*Ä:II*, 458/788). Roman sculptures, by contrast, are more like portraits. They do not try to capture the divine in the human; they do not imaginatively channel mythological gods and present them in inorganic material that nevertheless seems to be alive. They instead depict humans as naturalistically as possible: "this developing 'truth to nature' permeates every aspect of Roman sculpture" (*Ä:II*, 458/788). No matter how impressive these imitations might be, Hegel concludes, they lack "what is really perfect in a work of art," namely the "poetry of the ideal in the strict sense of the word" (*Ä:II*, 458/788). They are, in short, prosaic. Strict accuracy, Hegel concludes, "is the sole merit of mediocre artists, no matter how highly they may plume themselves on their productions and artistic judgment" (*Ä:II*, 438/772).

Christian sculpture is also by definition limited since its principle is not easily compatible with sculpture. Here Hegel repeats several points familiar from his discussion of romantic art. Christianity is "essentially concerned with the inner life that has withdrawn into itself out of the external world" and does not fully reunite with it. It also has themes at its core—"[g]rief, agony both physical and mental . . . deep feeling, heart, love, and emotion"—that do not lend themselves to depiction in three dimensions (*Ä:II*, 458/788–789). Romantic art thus turns away from sculpture to painting, music, and poetry. The romantic sculpture that is nevertheless produced often, like later Greek sculpture, loses its self-sufficient position and becomes an "adornment of architecture" (*Ä:II*, 459/789).

Despite its many hurdles, Christian sculpture is still possible. It can in fact remain "faithful to the proper principle of plastic art when it sticks more closely to the Greeks" or when it manages to treat "standing figures of heroes and kings" sculpturally (*Ä:II*, 460/789–790). Michelangelo, Hegel suggests, manages this feat in his Pietà.[14] But given the fundamental incompatibility between the principle of sculpture and the Christian worldview, only an artist of Michelangelo's stature can succeed at such a task.

Generally, then, sculpture's success at capturing the romantic worldview will be limited. At this point, then, we transition from sculpture to arts that use a different material. The sculpted human is in fact "not the full and wholly concrete man," meaning that "the anthropomorphism of art remains incomplete in ancient sculpture" (*Ä:II*, 462/790). This is because sculpture cannot depict "humanity in its absolute universality which at the same time is identified with the principle of absolute personality" and "what is so commonly called 'human', i.e. the factor of subjective individuality, human weakness . . . caprice, passion, natural needs, etc." (*Ä:II*, 461/791). Sculpture, Hegel concludes, "is insufficient for giving actuality to this material, so that other arts had to appear in order to realize what sculpture is never able to achieve" (*Ä:II*, 462/791).

4. From Decoration to Action: The Ends of Sculpture

Sculpture exists in "perfect purity" when single statues are arranged independently in temples (*Ä:II*, 431/766). Its first move *away* from this perfect purity comes with the introduction of action. In early examples such as the Medici Venus or Apollo Belvedere, the action is achieved "without any disturbance of the divine repose" or any "representation of the figure in conflict or struggle" (see again Figure 3.2)

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[14] Of Hegel's other examples, one he admits may not be a Michelangelo; the other he claims is but in fact is not. See Knox's footnote at *Ä:II*, 790.

(*Ä:II*, 431/766). The inclusion even of this minimum of action, however, means that as beautiful as these sculptures are, Winckelmann and Lessing were wrong to describe them as "supreme ideals of art" (*Ä:II*, 431/766).[15] Already in this slightly later period, artists had begun to pursue "what pleased and was agreeable to the eye and did not adhere any longer to the severe and genuine style" (*Ä:II*, 431/766). Among the Elgin marbles, for instance, we find some figures that aim only at pleasing spectators through their grace or attractiveness. Even though these statues' depiction of action mean they are already a step removed from paradigmatic sculpture, the same "cheerfulness and serenity" that typify paradigmatic sculptures pervades the action, so initially spiritual freedom is preserved. Greek artists' ability to maintain some cheerful serenity even in depicting action extended to sculptures that were yet another step removed from sculpture's ideal, namely those depicting "delightful situations" (*Ä:II*, 432/767), for instance of the "sports of Eros" (*Ä:II*, 432/767) or the little boy plucking a thorn from his foot.

Sculpture's movement away from its essence accelerates when it depicts groups. A group almost by definition causes a "tendency outwards" since the grouped figures will necessarily be related to and interact with each other in some way. At first such sculpture portrays peaceful, non-dynamic interaction. Although they depart from the gods' complete self-referentiality and do not belong within the temple itself, these groupings are still appropriate for the Parthenon. But the next kind of combinations begins to display "conflicts, discordant actions, grief, etc." Here, Hegel says, as sculpture begins "to depart from its own proper and therefore independent sphere," it also moves further from its independence by being "brought into closer connection with architecture so that [it] served to decorate spaces in or on buildings" (*Ä:II*, 433/768).[16] Paradigmatic single sculptures "stood peaceful, calm, and sacred in the inner shrine, which was there for the sake of this statue"; once they lose this calm, they come instead to serve architecture (*Ä:II*, 433/768).

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[15] Hegel here passes over the fact that Lessing and Winckelmann in fact had very different assessments of sculpture that led to this common judgment.

[16] Schelling, too, says these groupings begin to be more like painting: see Schelling (1989), §133.

Hegel's general claim that paradigmatic sculpture should not depict conflict predisposes him to disapprove of the famous statue depicting the Greek hero Laocöon being slain, together with his sons, by writhing serpents. This sculpture had been taken by Winckelmann as paradigmatic of classical Greek nobility of character since Laocöon, despite his agony, appears not to be crying out. Lessing's 1766 response to Winckelmann protested that Greek *poetry* included ample expression of extreme suffering. The sculpted Laocoön's silence, he concluded, was due not to the Greek character but to essential differences between sculpture and poetry.[17] Hegel seems uninterested in these nuances, commenting only that the discussion had prompted "armchair scholars" [*Stubengelehrte*] everywhere to obsess about "whether Laocoön is actually crying out and whether it is appropriate for sculpture in general to attempt to express a cry" (*Ä:II*, 434/769).[18] Otherwise, Hegel's praise of the statue is indeed mixed. He admits that "despite the profound grief and profound truth it conveys, despite the convulsive contraction of the body and the tension of all the muscles, still nobility and beauty are preserved" (*Ä:II*, 434/769). But he criticizes the "artificiality of the arrangement, the mathematical character of the pose" (*Ä:II*, 434/769). These mark *Laocoön* as a later work "which aims at outstripping simple beauty and life by a deliberate display of its knowledge in the build and musculature of the human body" (*Ä:II*, 434/769). The statue "tries to please by an all too subtle delicacy in its workmanship" (*Ä:II*, 435/769). "The step from the innocence and greatness of art to a mannerism [*Manier*]" Hegel concludes, "has here already been taken" (*Ä:II*, 435/769).[19]

In the stages of sculpture that follow, statues lose their original affiliation with temples completely and are "set up in the most various places, e.g. before entrances to galleries, on esplanades, staircase-landings, in alcoves, etc." (*Ä:II*, 435/769). These sculptures can exhibit a wide variety of situations and so better capture daily life. In doing so, however, they further transgress sculpture's essence and attempt to do what will be better achieved by painting. Nevertheless, Hegel has complimentary things to say about the Victory on the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin whose "simplicity and repose" approaches the classical ideal and whose proportions allow us to discern both Victory and her horses from our place below them. Christian Friedrich Tieck's Apollo, he by contrast complains, looked fine in the studio, but its busy combination of griffins' wings and Apollo's lyre, together with its elevation on the Berlin Konzerthaus, blur the entire group.

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[17] Winckelmann's comments on Laocoön can be found in his 1755–6 *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Wercke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (Winckelmann 1960, 29–61, translated at Winckelmann 2013, 31–55). Lessing's essay is entitled *Laokoon, oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Lessing 1990, translated at Lessing 1984). For discussions of both, see Beiser (2009), 171ff. and 266ff.

[18] Translation modified. Compare A20, 174–175 and Hm28, 100.

[19] For discussion of this point, see Houlgate (2007a), 76.

Hegel continues: "The last mode of presentation whereby sculpture takes an important step towards the principle of painting is the relief" (*Ä:II*, 436/771). Here Hegel claims, as had Schelling before him, that sculpture's characteristic three dimensions ultimately begin to vanish, prefiguring their complete disappearance in painting.[20] Figures can now be viewed only in profile; they are no longer independent of their viewers' position but require us to stand before them. Ancient reliefs cannot achieve the perspective of painting, meaning they can only depict actions such as processions. Nevertheless, reliefs are everywhere, adorning "utensils, sacrificial bowls, votive offerings, cups, tankards, urns, lamps, etc." (*Ä:II*, 437/771). This proliferation is testament to the artist's "wit of invention" but can "no longer keep in view the proper aim of sculpture" (*Ä:II*, 437/771).

Just as architecture began to decline when it moved away from its essence, namely showcasing its housing of the divine, sculpture begins to decline when it moves away from its essential self-enclosed individuality. Sculpture's conceptual end, then, comes when it has exhausted its potential to express this individuality. There is nothing in sculpture's development that parallels architecture's movement from independence to dependence and then to a dependence that transcends itself. Instead, sculpture is only independent until its attempts at incorporating action make it dependent and it begins to serve architecture as decoration. But since dependence is not part of sculpture's essence, this development signals its end.

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[20] On Schelling, see Pöggeler (2000), 341.

This end also illustrates sculpture's strange position within the arts. It is, on the one hand, art's culmination as the art "best adapted to give shape to the ideal" (*Ä:II*, 429/765). On the other, its essence limits its ability to accomplish all that art should accomplish. Sculpture's three-dimensional extension already announces its difficulties. Spirit's "proper existence is its expression in speech, deeds, [and] actions which are the development of its inner life and disclose to it what it is" (*Ä:II*, 353/703). Sculpture, as we have seen, in fact begins to decline when it portrays action. Speech is out of its purview entirely. Hegel also suggests that imagination's central position in his aesthetics puts sculpture at a disadvantage. Even though sculpture can better depict the body than can, for instance, poetry, aesthetic purposes are better served when "this deficiency is made up by imagination"—when a poem's description of a face prompts us to conjure that face in our minds. Imagination also "brings the man before us above all in *action*," including supplying motives, feelings, thoughts. Sculpture's essential inaction means it is unable to portray this crucial part of our understanding of human freedom. Its singular place in the trajectory of the individual arts is indicative of art's vexed position in Hegel's philosophy in general. At the point of art's culmination, sculpture also provides evidence of art's limitation.

But like the other arts, sculpture ends in other ways as well. It ends, as we have seen, when it loses its formal peacefulness and becomes pleasant. This is not entirely bad: Hegel reports that the "pleasing style" in sculpture and other arts includes "little independent miniatures, decoration, ornaments, dimples on the cheeks, graceful coiffures, smiles, robes variously draped," all of which are "unconstrained and alive" (*Ä:II*, 252/619). But they are no longer paradigmatically art. After its peak, sculpture ends in two different directions, as is often the case in art's development. In one direction, it goes back to serving architecture by decorating buildings. In another, it abandons its poetic imagining of gods in human forms and retreats into imitation.

But at its peak, sculpture easily meets Hegel's idealist criteria by showing how it itself allows the Idea to appear to sense. Sculpture shows the identity of identity and difference by showing the complete interpenetration of spiritual and physical. It also shows the divine in human form. And, like architecture's ability to bring our attention to our role in the conceptualization of space, sculpture brings us to consider the reflective capacity necessary to recognize shape. By so perfectly capturing living flesh, it challenges our understanding of inorganic matter and, by creating out of inorganic material the semblance of our own flesh and blood, it makes our embodiment strange to us. I began this chapter with Hegel's claim that sculpture is "the miracle of spirit's giving itself an image of itself in something purely material" (*Ä:II*, 362/710). Just as notable is the fact that spirit "so forms this external thing that it is present to itself in it and recognizes in it the appropriate shape of its own inner life" (*Ä:II*, 362/710). In representing to us the miracle of our own spiritual embodiment, sculpture assures its value even as it is transcended by more interior arts.

Before turning to those interior arts, it is worth asking whether Hegel's limiting of sculpture to the human form makes his theory obsolete, given the proliferation of non-human and, indeed, non-representational sculpture in contemporary art. It is difficult to imagine Hegel parsing Calder and Brancusi's abstract forms, the environmental art of Andy Goldsworthy, or Olafur Eliasson's light sculptures. But two points might still be made. The first is that insofar as Hegel's theory of sculpture encourages us to think about shape and our experience of it as part of our understanding of ourselves and the world, non-representational sculpture can still facilitate that. As we will see in his theories of painting and music, Hegel was open to the idea that an individual art might come to have its own form as its object—in the case of painting, color, and in the case of music, sound. A Hegelian analysis of shape as shape is not, then, impossible. In such cases, this would also support what I have described as Hegel's idealist claim that humans are the ones who experience shape *as shape*: an art that brings that to our attention is giving us sensible access to the truth. In that case, his theory could be brought into line with certain modernist narratives that aim, as Torsen puts it, to "decipher what sculpture really is about just from an analysis of the formal possibilities of the medium: sculpture is about space, exploring the different relations of the three-dimensional."[21]

Hegel may have been too committed to individuality as sculpture's principle to admit of this kind of revision. But as Torsen argues, this need not mean that Hegel cannot help us parse contemporary sculpture. For in fact the human body has not ceased to be a frequent subject of sculpture. "In the art of the last hundred years," Torsen reminds us, "there are bodies of all sizes and shapes, bodies of colour, unfit bodies, ugly bodies, bodies that are incomplete, and formed plastic material that merely gestures at body parts or flesh. Why," she then asks, "is the body still giving shape to the artist's material, at a historical point when the artist is free to shape his or her material without the constraint of nature on the chosen form?" Torsen proposes that we consider that Hegel "got the body wrong" and that there are "issues of embodiment and subjectivity that are still worth working through for Spirit at this stage in history." She suggests that artists like Louise Bourgeois or Lynda Benglis might be showing us that an "overly theoretical approach to our self-understanding" as embodied is falling short, or that sculpture might help us appreciate the "preconditions for our own psychological and social identities."[22] On this reading, such artists can push us to confront new puzzles of embodiment that the more interior subjective arts cannot.

I think this is a very fruitful line of interpretation as long as we primarily consider Hegel's philosophy of art as an extension of his practical philosophy, allowing us to embody the worldview our society struggles to express. But insofar as Hegel is also arguing in Part III that art allows us to experience explicitly what we otherwise only experience implicitly, I think he also means us to witness a representation of the way in which we are spirit embodied. Hegel thinks the spiritual can only be housed in the human. Because he is a holist, he does not think body and spirit can be fully separated. If sculpture is the art that helps us experience this embodiment aesthetically, it need not only express our culture's view of embodiment. It should also enable us to sense the more basic fact *of* embodiment. In Hegel's view, the still sculptures of ancient Greece can achieve that in a way that modern interrogations of embodiment can never surpass. Modern subjectivity interrupts this stillness, making it all the more important that we can return to it, if only in museums that allow us to glimpse a moment when this embodiment existed before its fateful disruption.

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[21] Torsen (2017), 309. Torsen here emphasizes sculpture's relation to space; to my mind, the more important relation is shape.

[22] Ibid., 310, 328.

8

Subjectivity in Retreat

Painting

1. Introduction to the Romantic Arts

With Christianity's vision of the divine inhabiting the human, humans' focus turns inward. In his description of the romantic arts as a particular form of art in Part II, we saw Hegel argue for a variety of ways in which this turn inward shapes art's trajectory. Now in Part III, Hegel considers how this interiority affects the development of art from humans' ability to see three dimensions in two-dimensional painted canvases to our ability to perceive time through sound, and finally to our ability to evoke inner images through the power of speech. In doing so, what Hotho designates the romantic arts—painting, music, and poetry—make the familiar strange: they call our attention to capacities—sight, hearing, inner imagination—we otherwise take for granted.[1] They also make the strange familiar by showing us how phenomena as mysterious as painting's third dimension, music's ephemeral existence, and poetry's linguistic images are actually a product of our own creative capacities: not given but mutually produced in cooperation with the world. As with the other individual arts, Hegel's argument here will focus on each art's essence: what makes a painting a painting, or music musical, or poetry poetic.

Romantic art begins with the end of spirit's perfect interpenetration with nature. What follows, Hegel says, is the dissolution of the inner and outer, spirit and nature, that sculpture achieved. When these sides come apart, spirit "stands opposed to externality as such, to nature and also to the inner life's own body" (*Ä:III*, 11–12/792). The subject retreats from the external world. The connection with the body is "slack and loose" (*Ä:III*, 13/794). Romantic art is immediately, then, at a disadvantage. In order to express spirit's retreat from the world, it must *sensibly show the withdrawal of the spirit out of the sensual.* If art is now to show spirit, it will simultaneously have to *show its own inadequacy* by hinting at spirit without fully disclosing it.

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[1] To repeat: although the classification of these three individual arts together as "romantic" is Hotho's and not Hegel's, I think it is justified by Hegel's characterization of the romantic era as emphasizing interiority and his clear tracing of the development of interiority through these three arts. He does say that painting belongs to romantic art at A20, 188 and H23, 236.

When the individual arts accomplish this, they accomplish something that neither architecture nor sculpture was capable of, namely a reconciliation that follows division. In this they resemble the reconciliation that comes in romantic art *after*, for instance, the divisiveness of satire, as recounted in earlier chapters. The "new unity thus won no longer bears the character of that first immediacy presented by sculpture, but of a unification and reconciliation displayed essentially as the mediation of the two different sides" (*Ä:III*, 12/793). This unification will be "capable of being completely manifested . . . in the inner and ideal life alone"—it will no longer be able to take physical form as the unity of spirit and nature did in sculpture (*Ä:III*, 12/793). But it will, precisely for this reason, achieve a higher synthesis: "the spirit which has drawn back into itself can present the substance of the spiritual world to itself only as spirit and therefore as subject, and in that presentation it acquires at the same time the principle of the spiritual reconciliation of the individual subject with God" (*Ä:III*, 13/793). Hegel's discussion of the three romantic arts is an exploration of how painting, music, and poetry can achieve this reunification.

The question for Hegel's discussion of sculpture was how its physicality—its extension in space, its interaction with shadow, its materials—enables it to achieve the principle of individuality. The question for painting is how its physicality—*or lack thereof*—enables it to achieve the first step in the principle of *subjectivity.* Painting will accomplish this feat by making its extension disappear in a way that itself is visible—it will "appear outwardly *as* inner, will extinguish the spatial dimensions of the material and change it out of their immediate existence into something opposite, namely a pure appearance produced by the spirit" (*Ä:III*, 14/794–795). At the point of its highest development, painting will use the “magic of colour in which what is objective begins as it were to vanish into thin air” (*Ä:III*, 133/889)—it will lead us to see forms that are themselves illusory because they exist only because of the contrast of color. In designating such effects magical, Hegel echoes other theorists such as Diderot, Tieck, Wackenroder, and Schelling; in specifying that these effects are achieved through color, as opposed to drawing, he sides with the “colorist” definition of painting in the ongoing battle to determine the hierarchy of the arts.[2] But painting’s magic also extends, in Hegel’s view, to depicting emotions made newly possible by Christianity’s interiority, namely love and bliss.

As with all the arts, painting’s status had inspired intense debate in the generations preceding Hegel’s lectures. Diderot’s 1796 *Essay on Painting* had a profound impact on Goethe’s understanding of painting as well as on his revolutionary theory of color. Herder, as we have seen, penned a spirited objection to Lessing’s theory of painting, charging that Lessing had not adequately distinguished it from sculpture.[3] Lessing in turn had objected to Winckelmann’s claim that painting had the same purpose and limits as poetry by arguing that the two were essentially different and needed to be held to separate standards.[4] In addition to his familiarity with these debates, Hegel’s own exposure to painting was substantial. He had access to major collections in Berlin and sought out opportunities to visit galleries as he traveled to Munich, Paris, Vienna, and—crucially—the Netherlands.[5] It is clear that he understood painting’s historical importance and valued its status within the hierarchy of the arts.

Hegel’s theory of painting has benefited significantly from recent scholarship, most notably Benjamin Rutter’s *Hegel and the Modern Arts* and Robert Pippin’s *After the Beautiful*. Both authors powerfully illuminate painting’s significance in Hegel’s greater aesthetic theory, but I will offer two points of dissent. The first concerns the significance of love and bliss among painting's paradigmatic emotions in the post-Christian era. The second concerns the meaning and relative importance of Hegel's designation of painting's inwardness in relation to his description of painting as making spirit's disappearance visible. I will argue that a slightly different emphasis, away from the social conditions of inwardness and toward Hegel's discussion of color, changes our evaluation of these terms and makes a more promising extension of Hegel's theory of painting into the contemporary world possible.

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[2] See Rutter (2010), 114. On Schelling, see Pöggeler (2000), 342.

[3] See the previous chapter and also Guyer (2014), 392.

[4] Beiser (2009), 189–190.

[5] Houlgate gives an extensive account of the paintings Hegel saw on his travels: see Houlgate (2000), 77–79. See also Sallis (2007), 103–104 and, especially for Hegel’s impression of the Netherlands as regards his assessment of painting, Grootenboer (2018).

2. The Presence of Absence: Painting and Christianity

Of course, Hegel acknowledges, pre-Christian civilizations produced paintings. But however skillful these artists were, they were unable, Hegel thinks, to develop painting's full potential. Painting is "brought to its own proper height through the content of romantic art alone" (*Ä:III*, 21/800). Why would this be? To achieve its essence, Hegel answers, painting needed a "deeper content"; it needed a "spiritual inwardness and depth of feeling" the pre-Christian world could not provide (*Ä:III*, 21/801). Painting thus needed Christianity to reach its potential just as Christianity needs painting to make its claims present to itself sensuously.

In fact, Hegel thinks that Christianity's message lay dormant in painting's own essence. Painting prompts us to see its *actual* external existence—its pigments on canvas—as *not* having "validity in the last resort": its physical reality must be "degraded" to meaning not itself but meaning the "pure appearance of the inner spirit which wants to contemplate itself there on its own account" (*Ä:III*, 22/801). The physical, two-dimensional painting, in short, is in an important sense not the three-dimensional image that we see. In showing the degradation of physical reality, painting evokes the retreat of the spiritual out of the physical, showing its absence. Painting embodies, as it were, the disappearance of the spirit out of the external world. It allows us to experience sensuously the replacement of the Greek gods' interpenetration of spirit and nature with Christianity's claim that the spiritual is within, showing "the inner life of the spirit which undertakes itself as *inner* in the mirror of externality" (*Ä:III*, 22–23/801–802). Painting thus physically embodies Christianity's renunciation of the world. Hegel's claim that this interiority is unique to or originated with Christianity is tendentious at best. His assertion that it is essential to painting's essence is no less contestable, suggesting a kind of pernicious circularity whose effect is the confirmation of religious superiority. Here Hegel's only defense—objectionable as it might be—is, it seems to me, his system: Christianity's appearance was necessary for reasons outlined in Chapter 4; painting's existence is required by the development of individual arts from externality to individuality to subjectivity.

Be that as it may, Christianity's locating of the divine within humans is also given physical form in art's shift from objects that exist independently of humans—buildings, sculptures—to objects that depend on human perception for their existence. The essence of the artwork thus shifts from the artwork to the *viewer's apprehension of the artwork*. "The statue is predominantly independent on its own account, unconcerned about the spectator," Hegel says; this is another way in which sculpture is self-sufficient and complete. Painting by contrast exists "for the spectator. The spectator is as it were in it from the beginning, is counted in with it" (*Ä:III*, 28/806). The idea that sculpture exists independently of the spectator is by no means uncontroversial.[6] But Hegel is adamant: in an important sense, the painting *does not exist as a painting* unless a viewer transforms it from a two-dimensional juxtaposition of color to an internal three-dimensional scene.[7] Part of painting's effect, Hegel suggested, is to make us aware of our ability to do this.

In transferring the third perspective from the reality of sculpture to the viewer's mind, painting develops a more intimate relation to the spectator than does sculpture. What makes the painting a painting is not the paint on canvas itself but fact that the viewer sees forms and figures despite the fact that they do not exist in any physically traceable way but are instead produced—as we will see—by the "magic" of color. In depending on the viewer in this way, painting also immediately exceeds both architecture and sculpture in one of art's key desiderata: it is *essentially* appearance, or the *Schein* all art should strive for. Painting, Hegel says, is the "art of *Schein* in general" (K26, 341).[8] It makes, as it were, its artificiality, and even its attempted deception, obvious.[9] It is able to hint at something that cannot be shown and, at the same time, *show* that it is hinting at something that cannot be shown.

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[6] Lichtenstein (2008), 4.

[7] Rush says this kind of point was almost anodyne already in Hegel's own day: see Rush (2018), 170.

This essential transformation contributes to painting's embodiment of Hegel's idealism. The painting originates as separate from the subject—it exists as a discrete object, a two-dimensional canvas covered with pigment. But this separation is "immediately dissipated": "by displaying what is subjective, the work, in its whole mode of presentation, reveals its purpose as existing not independently on its own account but for subjective apprehension, for the spectator" (*Ä:III*, 28/806). What the painting actually is—its essence as a painting, we might say—is not just the pigmented canvas: it is what it is only in unity, or in mutual formation, with the viewer. Hegel explicitly ties this recognition of mutual formation to the pleasure we take in painting: when we view a painting, he says, "satisfaction does not lie in the objects as they exist in reality but *in the purely contemplative interest in the external reflection of inner life*" (*Ä:III*, 28–9/806, italics mine). The objects exist, insofar as they do, in a space that itself exists only in the viewer's mind, suggesting a three-dimensionality independent of the three-dimensional world. In bringing this spontaneity to our attention, painting supports Hegel's ongoing project of guiding humans to see their mutually formative status with the world. The pleasure we experience when viewing a painting, then, is the pleasure of experiencing this truth.

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[8] Compare Hm28, 108; see Rutter (2010), 67.

[9] See Lichtenstein on history of illusion in painting and for an analysis of why illusion pleases us in the first place: Lichtenstein (2008), 58ff.

3. Painting's Content: Love, Bliss, Interiority

What subject matter, then, will allow painting to realize its potential by allowing it to show, as Sallis puts it, the "spirit in retreat"?[10] Painting can portray a range of emotions from joy to rage to sorrow. But painting comes fully into its own when it portrays emotions that hint at what cannot be fully presented, thus mirroring its own ability to show what is not actually there. These are emotions that presuppose "that the soul has worked its way through its feelings and powers and the whole of its inner life, i.e. that it has overcome much, suffered grief, endured anguish and pain of soul, and *yet in this disunion has preserved its integrity and withdrawn out of it into itself*" (*Ä:III*, 40/816, italics mine).

One such emotion is bliss. In Hegel's description, bliss [*Seligkeit*] is an elation possible when the soul, after experiencing "conflict and agony" has "triumphed over its sufferings" specifically by retreating into spiritual interiority (*Ä:III*, 41/816). This kind of triumph is fundamental to the Christian story. Greek heroes suffered and nobly, even cheerfully, accepted their fates. But their acceptance refers to no higher reality: they live, love, and die fully in this world, embodying the harmony Hegel consistently attributes to Greek civilization. Niobe and Laocöon's grief and pain are "as it is were final, and in place of reconciliation and satisfaction there can only enter a cold resignation" and "an empty endurance of fate" (*Ä:III*, 43/817). But in the case of Jesus's suffering and death, "his grief does not appear as merely human grief over a human fate; on the contrary, this is an awesome suffering, the feeling of an infinite negativity, but in a human person as his personal feeling. And yet, since it is God who suffers, there enters again an alleviation, a lowering of his suffering which cannot come to an outburst of despair" (*Ä:III*, 50/823). Through his perspective beyond suffering—his conviction that he would be resurrected—Jesus "is raised above his mere natural existence and its finitude" in a way Greek heroes were not (*Ä:III*, 41/816). Christian bliss is thus a "death to the world": only in renouncing life can Jesus transcend it and, in turn, provide redemption for the community. This renunciation is another instance of Christian interiority that is a cornerstone of Hegel's description of modern subjectivity.[11] It is this combination of suffering, transcendence, and renunciation that makes bliss a particularly Christian emotion.

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[10] Sallis (2007), 110.

A similar renunciation of the world is evident in depictions of the love that, as Hegel already argued in his description of romantic art, originates with Christianity.[12] Here in his discussion of painting, Hegel again references love's intersubjective foundation: in love, the person sacrifices himself to the beloved but "in this sacrifice still retains his own self and in the very cancelling of his independence acquires a precisely affirmative independence" (*Ä:III*, 43/818). But his emphasis as regards painting is the "religious love of romanticism," which, like bliss, gestures at what cannot be portrayed (*Ä:III*, 43/817). In paintings of the Madonna and child, for instance, Mary's love for Jesus is the love of a mother for a son but also for God: in successful romantic paintings, we see the deeper spiritual meaning expressed in the intensity of her distant gaze. In depicting Mary's grief over her son's brutal death, a true romantic painter will also allow us a glimpse of something beyond the grief itself. Again Hegel offers Greek mythology as a comparison. "Niobe too has lost all her children," he reminds us. But since she has no hope of greater meaning in their deaths, her grief is all-consuming; all that is left to her is to be turned into stone. Mary, on the other hand, has "the free concrete spiritual depth of feeling which preserves the absolute essence of what she has lost, and even in the loss of the loved one she ever retains the peace of love" (*Ä:III*, 53/826). She grieves her son's death but achieves bliss by knowing that her son is not lost to her forever.[13]

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[11] The developmental story here is more complicated, involving Christianity's birth out of Roman decadence and nihilism as Hegel discusses in his lectures on the philosophy of religion. See, for instance, *VRel*, 155ff./687ff.

[12] Compare A20, 202–205; H23, 236; K26, 345–348; and Hm28, 109.

[13] Pippin and Rutter both discuss love in the context of painting, but their emphasis is more on the human intersubjectivity and romantic worldview that underlie it than on the withdrawal that the *painted* aspect of the painting achieves. See Pippin (2014), 25; Rutter (2010), 74. Again: while I think the human experience of love is present in Hegel's analysis, it is the withdrawal implied in Christianity that is more relevant here.

Successful paintings of Mary, then, will show the intense interiority of her gaze but in the service of indicating what is absent: by showing, that is, the spiritual assurance that cannot be portrayed in art because it involves a withdrawal from the physical world into a spiritual realm (see for instance Color Figures 1 and 6). Her love "affords bliss and an enjoyment of heaven" and "rises above time and the particular individuality of that character" (*Ä:III*, 44/818). Together with bliss, such love is a quintessentially Christian emotion. Painting, in its reduction of three dimensions to two and so its own ability to show what is not there, is perfectly suited to hinting at this higher reality. For this reason, Christianity finds its best physical expression in painting, and painting finds its perfect subject matter in Christianity.[14] Within this sphere, it flourishes most obviously in high Renaissance paintings, often of Christian themes, by Titian and Correggio (see Color Figure 5) (*Ä:III*, 123/881–882).

Christian depictions of worship, martyrdom, and transfiguration can also achieve this evocation of love and bliss. In each case, the artist must show the contrast between the physical form and the spiritual content: the physical agony of martyrdom, for instance, must be portrayed such that "the soul must be assured of the *objective* absolutely complete reconciliation of man with God" (*Ä:III*, 58/830). Again, painting can portray this bliss not only through posture and facial expression but by displaying its renunciation of the third dimension. When done well, artists in this genre produce "works that are immortal because of the depth of their thought. And when their burden is truthfully portrayed, they are the supreme elevation of mind to its blessedness, the most soulful thing, the greatest spiritual depth that any artist can ever provide" (*Ä:III*, 59/831).

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[14] Bungay is characteristically dismissive of Hegel's attempt to link Christianity and painting in this way: "What Hegel might defensibly wish to claim is that certain contents peculiar to Christianity cannot be expressed in sculpture, but only in painting, that is, that Christianity needs painting. In fact, he says the reverse, that painting needs Christianity to reach its greatest heights, because their principles correspond" (Bungay 1984, 122). As difficult as Hegel's theory of painting is to articulate, I do not find the second possibility implausible, given the correlation between painting and Christianity's subject matter articulated earlier.

But painting is not confined to religious themes. If it can find an "echo of the heart" in the external world—if it can find in nature something akin to its own moods—it "can recognize traits akin to the spirit" in that world (*Ä:III*, 60/831). But whatever content it adopts must allow the painter to show spirit in retreat: to show that something is absent. Landscape paintings are Hegel's first example. Hills, mountains, and rivers can be perceived simply as natural objects. But paintings of nature can produce "moods in our heart which correspond to the moods of nature" (*Ä:III*, 60/831). These moods cannot, in themselves, be portrayed; they can only be hinted at in their absence. The successful landscape painter will conjure the intense inwardness of such a mood while also making clear that it cannot, as such, be made sensible.[15] A landscape cannot portray love or bliss, but it can hint at moods that evoke the interiority of these modern emotions. Here again the painter must be careful not to lapse into imitation: "the characteristic sympathy between objects thus animated and specific moods of the soul, is what painting has to emphasize" (*Ä:III*, 61/832).

The most telling extension of Hegel's theory of painting beyond religious themes is Dutch genre painting. Here Hegel differs from dismissive commentary on these paintings by contemporaries such as Tieck, A. W. Schlegel, and Schelling, the last of whom described them as "uncouth."[16] Hegel instead—again here as in his description of romantic art generally—praises Dutch depictions of ordinary people absorbed in their tasks with an intensity and devotion, Hegel suggests, that rivals the religious subjects of earlier centuries (see again Figure 5.1). In these paintings, "the right thing is simply to see each task through to its conclusion, no matter how trivial—to put one's heart and soul into it . . . This intertwining of the man and his task produces a harmony of the subject and the particular character of his activity in his nearest circumstances, and *such intertwining is also a form of intimacy* [*Innigkeit*]" (*Ä:III*, 62/833).[17] By evoking this intimacy, genre painting locates what Hegel calls a "spiritual depth" evident "in scenes of human life which may appear to us as purely accidental or even base and vulgar," as in genre painting (*Ä:III*, 61/832). It can also be found "in wholly insignificant objects torn from their living environment," for instance in still lifes.

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[15] Rutter (2010), 76. See also Pippin on the significance of landscapes: Pippin (2018), 227–229. Given Hegel's dismissal of nature as a source of beauty, however, the significance of nature even here would remain limited.

[16] See Rutter (2010), 64; Pöggeler (2000), 64.

[17] I am using Rutter's translation and italics here: see Rutter (2010), 94.

Rutter rightly emphasizes inwardness and intimacy as crucial to Hegel's explanation for why Dutch masters continue to fulfill painting's potential.[18] But the more important consideration, in my view, is that such painting, through its evocation of this inwardness, continues to signal the disappearance of spirit. It is no longer spirit understood in the early Christian sense—it no longer shows martyrs confronting their deaths with the bliss of the assurance of heaven. But just as Mary's absorption hints at a dimension of spirituality that cannot be conveyed, Dutch genre paintings suggest a value given to their everyday activities by their struggle for independence from Spain.[19] They have triumphed against the Spanish, Hegel reminds us, but their triumph is not of this world: it is in the inwardness of their own hearts. As in the earlier religious case, the resulting emotions, Hegel suggests, are best depicted by painting because of painting's ability to hint at what is absent. We cannot actually see "the love, the mind and spirit, the soul" evoked here, but the talented painter can portray them in painting in the same way that previous art portrayed Christian bliss and love (*Ä:III*, 67/837).

The significance of inwardness in modern painting is then as much in the division it represents—its withdrawal from the world—as in the inwardness it evokes. The extreme subjectivity portrayed in these paintings is evidence of the alienation of inner from outer that is the hallmark of the post-classical period. It is true that—like Christian evocations of bliss or love—these paintings are also scenes of reconciliation. Rutter is right to suggest that in "this arrangement, as in all successful romantic painting, the negative (here, banality) is both acknowledged and overcome."[20] But what is just as important, I think, is that the real object of these paintings—whether landscapes, genre painting, or still lifes—is only hinted at. Rutter is also right that Hegel finds genre painting successful because it reconciles us to the triviality of modern concerns, and that part of our reconciliation is due to the absorption in their tasks its characters display (see again Figure 5.1). This, as we saw in Chapter 5, is how genre painting resembles objective humor. But just as important is that this inwardness evokes spirit's withdrawal: it suggests that there is more there than the painting can portray. Furthermore, the painting, through its cancellation of the third dimension, embodies this very inability. And insofar as what is hinted at is the love and bliss won through suffering *and* the consciousness of spiritual life as a withdrawal from the world, genre painting can fulfill painting's mission.

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[18] The range of German words includes *Innigkeit*, intimacy or, as Rush says, "the heartfelt"; *Inneres*, or inwardness, and *Innerlichkeit*, which can be translated introspection or, again, inwardness. Rush describes *Innigkeit* as "an intensified subspecies of self-conscious inwardness" that has "such intensity that the outside world recedes in significance" but claims that Hegel does not differentiate the two systematically (Rush 2018, 168). Although there are certainly distinctions to be made here, my general point does not require further differentiation as long as what is referred to is the subject's turn away from the world and into herself.

[19] Absorption is another term Rutter, following Michael Fried's analysis of modern French art, emphasizes in Dutch genre painting: see Rutter (2010), 92–100.

4. The Essence of Color

Whether it is conveying the bliss that suggests an eternal perspective beyond suffering or evoking the meaning of everyday objects, painting hints at a spirituality that cannot be fully expressed physically. What tools does painting have at its disposal to attempt this difficult task? What is essential about painting such that it can achieve this?

The debate over whether drawing or color—*disegno* or *colorito*, in the terms used by warring Florentines and Venetians to stake out their respective preferences—was primary in painting had, by Hegel's lifetime, been active for almost two centuries. In Hegel's own age, Kant had sided with drawing, arguing that color was only capable of helping us better intuit a drawing's form.[21] Schelling had agreed, asserting that "[c]olor is merely that through which the material side of things becomes form."[22] The evidence from the lecture manuscripts indicates that Hegel, instead, sides with the colorists who, since Roger de Piles's theorizing in seventeenth-century France, had claimed that what made a painting *painting* was the use of color.[23] Hotho, however, adds several paragraphs embracing both technical perspectivism and drawing as fundamental to painting. As Sallis has argued, these paragraphs seem distinctly at odds with Hegel's argument about painting's essential foundation in color, so I omit them here.[24] In emphasizing color, Hegel has two main sources: Denis Diderot's 1765 essay "Notes on Painting," which Hegel likely read in Goethe's translation, and Goethe's own 1810 *Theory of Colors*. In fact, his analysis closely tracks the latter both in organization and in argument.

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[20] Ibid., 95.

[21] Kant (1990), §14. See also Houlgate (2000), 66 and Guyer (2014), 435.

Hegel acknowledges that some drawing underlies painting, but he insists that painting must "go beyond it" (*Ä:III*, 69/838).[25] "[P]ainting must *paint* [*so muß doch die Malerei* malen] if it intends to portray its subjects in their living individuality and particular detail," he says (*Ä:III*, 69/838). The sketchings of artists such as Raphael and Dürer are of value and interest, but painting's "proper task" is coloring (*Ä:III*, 68/838). In making this specification, Hegel uses the indigenous German term *Färbung* as well as *Kolorit*, the German adaption of the Italian *colorito*. In the 1828 lectures we read "[i]t is color that makes the painter a painter" [*Es ist die Farbe, die den Maler zum Maler macht*]" and "to painting belongs coloration" [*zum Gemälde gehört Kolorierung*].[26]

As a foundation for his discussion of color, Hegel first discusses dark and light.[27] Following Goethe in his argument against Newton, he argues that color does not emerge "from white light as a result of prismatic refraction" but depends "on background conditions such as spatial distance, composition of reflective surfaces, size of the reflective area, etc."[28] Colors, Hegel says, "win their effect in their reciprocal relation to one another" and "repress and interfere with one another" (*Ä:III*, 72–73/841). Red and yellow, for instance, are brighter than blue—a fact that Hegel, like Schelling, thinks Goethe has correctly explained.[29] Colors themselves have certain affective qualities that correlate to their relation to light and dark. Blue corresponds to "softness, sensuousness, stillness, to inward-looking depth of feeling" (*Ä:III*, 73/842). Red, by contrast, is "masculine, dominant, regal; green indifferent and neutral."[30] The Dutch are geniuses at evoking effects that depend "partly on an emphasis of the form and partly on the proximity into which every single nuance of colour is brought" (*Ä:III*, 75/843). A painting should also harmonize colors, introducing oppositions and then reconciling those oppositions. The Flemish in particular use marked contrasts that produce the satisfaction of reconciliation. Hegel expresses annoyance at recent German paintings in which "all the colours are kept in unclarity and enervated feebleness and they are damped down, with the result that nothing really emerges." Such paintings can only achieve "great sweetness and a flattering loveliness, but it is all insignificant and unimportant" (*Ä:III*, 77/845).

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[22] Schelling (1989), §87. A. W. Schlegel by contrast divided painting into "Zeichnung, Komposition, Kolorit, und Hellung" (Pöggeler 2000, 340).

[23] Lichtenstein (2008), 6–8.

[24] Sallis (2007), 112.

[25] As Houlgate points out, Hegel does discuss drawing as a framework for painting in 1820: see Houlgate (2000), 66.

[26] Hm28, 115. Compare A20, 214–220; H23, 241–243; and K26, 352–355.

[27] See also Hm28, 115. Possibly also on Hegel's mind is *chiaroscuro*, which he mentions at H23, 245. In his *Zur Farbenlehre*, Goethe indeed discusses *chiaroscuro* [*Helldunkel*] in a separate section from *Kolorit*. See Goethe (2014), ¶¶849 ff. and ¶¶871ff. For discussion, see Currie (2013), 62. For more on Goethe's theory of color, see Rush (2018), 169–172 and Förster (2012), 267–271.

Hegel mentions three notable effects that color is able to achieve. The first is atmospheric perspective, or distance through color. The second is some painters' ability to paint carnation [*Inkarnat*] or human flesh. Carnation, he says, "unites all other colours marvelously in itself without giving independent emphasis to either one or another" (*Ä:III*,

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[28] For more on light, dark, and color in painting, see Rush (2018), 170–172, 180.

[29] On Schelling, see Pöggeler (2000), 342.

[30] In the twentieth century, Kandinsky famously argued that colors had spiritual properties. See Kandinsky (1977). Houlgate suggests that Hegel would have objected to Kandinsky's claim that "naturalistic forms draw the viewer's attention away from the inner feelings expressed in a painting" (Houlgate 2000, 72). I agree with Houlgate's assessment that "[t]o reject illusion, as Kandinsky does, in the name of freeing painting from external nature, is thus to push painting too much in the direction of music" (ibid., 75). Music is properly the realm of feeling in Hegel's system; painting's effects should instead draw attention to our capacities to see what is not there.

78/846). The reds of a cheek are "only a gloss, or rather a shimmer, which seems to press outwards from within and then shades off unnoticeably into the rest of the flesh-colour," he writes; "[t]hrough the transparent yellow of the skin there shines the red of the arteries and the blue of the veins"; the "whole appearance is animated and ensouled from within" (see the Pharisee in Color Figure 5) (*Ä:III*, 78/846). Animals' skin includes a variety of colors but lacks the interpenetration of colors visible in human skin: "the variety is rather a result of different surfaces and planes . . . than of an interpenetration of different colours." Hegel agrees with Goethe and Diderot that the evocation of human skin is one of painting's highest achievements.[31] Artists who achieve it attain the "magic of appearance [*Schein*]" (Hm28, 117).

Related to this effect is what Hotho designates as the third characteristic of painting. Hotho renders this characteristic *Duftigkeit*—variously translated as airiness, lightness, or frothiness. Knox translates it as *sfumato*, an Italian term designating the practice of blending colors together such that no line—no drawing—separates objects: instead, they are differentiated through a transition of color alone. What is produced with this effect is "an inherently objectless play of pure appearance which forms the extreme soaring pinnacle of colouring" (*Ä:III*, 80/848).[32] There are no particular lines; "transition is everywhere"; light and shadow "shine into one another, just as an inner force works through an external thing" (*Ä:III*, 81/848). With this combination of effects, painting reaches a new level of magic even beyond its cancelling of the third dimension: it allows the eye to see distinct objects where there are only shades of color.[33] The Dutch ability to do this means that "there is spread over the whole, with the clarity, the brilliance, the depth, the smooth and luscious lighting of colours, a pure appearance of animation; and this is what constitutes the magic of colouring and is properly due to the spirit of the artist who is the magician" (*Ä:III*, 81/848).[34]

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[31] Compare Schelling (1989), §87. As with the case of Hegel's description of the ideal profile in his discussion of sculpture, the racial implications of this description are impossible to mistake: Hegel clearly thinks painting's pinnacle is achieved by depicting *white* skin.

[32] The sourcing in this case is very complicated. There is only evidence, as far as I can tell, that Hegel uses versions of the word *duftig* in the 1828 lectures (Hm28, 117). But there he explicitly uses it to describe carnation. In the 1823 lectures, he does not use the word *duftig* but does describe something like what Hotho includes under *Duftigkeit* and Knox translates *sfumato* (H23, 244–245). Hegel does mention what might be understood as *sfumato* at K26, 357.

[33] In the 1823 lectures, we read that this *sfumato* effect is "*Die vollkomene Kunst*": see H23, 244.

Especially the last two of these examples—carnation and *sfumato*—show painting's essence, namely color, at its highest potential. They in turn dictate the material that Hegel thinks best allows painting to achieve its potential: oils. Mosaics cannot produce the effect of colors shining through each other. Tempura dries too quickly to allow any nuanced shading. Oil, by contrast, "not only permits the most delicate and soft fusion and shading of colours, with the result that the transitions are so unnoticeable that we cannot say where a colour begins and ends," but also achieves a "brilliance" and a "translucency of different layers of colour" (*Ä:III*, 80/848). Among the masters of this technique, Hegel mentions Titian, Dürer, and—again—the Dutch (see Color Figures 3 and 5).

These effects of painting most explicitly bring out the viewer's necessary contribution to the appearance of painted objects. When we realize that the boundary between skin and clothing is not demarcated by a line the artist has drawn but is implied by our mind's interaction with the blending of colors, we again have a model for understanding our mutually formative relationship with reality. The same is true when we realize that what makes painted satin look like satin is our ability to convert simple colors to the visual sensation of fabric in our minds. The brushes of white, blue, and yellow do not make an image of satin until a human unites them in perception. Insofar as Hegel's claims about reality involve this kind of mutual formation between subjectivity and the world, the pleasure that such a painting gives us, then, is the pleasure of experiencing truth as Hegel understands it.

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[34] Houlgate is concerned mostly with how painting can show emotions that express human subjectivity: "by subtly blending and overlaying colors the painter can create visual nuances in a face or in a gesture which express the most delicate nuances of inner feeling and character which the sculptor can never capture" (Houlgate 2000, 66). I see Hegel's point to be more that paint in this case can show a "shining through" and a sense of form without lines in a way that shows spirit's retreat.

5. Composition, Characterization, and History

If artists want to achieve painting's maximum effect, what composition should they choose? How should the objects portrayed be arranged, and in what setting? In early painting, sculpture and architecture still predominate: Jesus or his disciples are surrounded by architectural shapes, between pillars and arches (see Color Figure 6). But soon painting abandons architecture and begins to liberate its figures from "repose and inactivity," surrounding them with "variegated external surroundings" that bring them closer to "*dramatic* liveliness, so that the grouping of its figures indicates their activity in a specific situation" (*Ä:III*, 87/853). In short, painting begins to depict *action* and, in so doing, begins to pave the way for the conceptual development of poetry.

Since painting can only really portray a single moment, the situation must be portrayed in its "bloom," or the exact moment when it comes to fruition: the moment of victory in battle, for instance. Painting's ability to include a wide variety of objects means it can develop a "whole variety of even accidental particulars," allowing us a vision of "particular persons in all the accidents of their particular character" (*Ä:III*, 100/863–864). Its focus on deep subjective emotion means ugly bodies can be tolerated in painting in a way they could not be in sculpture. Painting's capacity to show the range of humanity is especially obvious when we consider portraits. In fact, Hegel says, in a certain sense "the advances made by painting from its unsuccessful attempts onwards have consisted precisely in its working its way to the portrait" (*Ä:III*, 103/865). But if the portrait is to be a "genuine work of art" as opposed to just a record of particular individuals, "the spiritual character must be emphasized and made predominant" (*Ä:III*, 103/866). Titian is a master of this: his characters "give us a conception of spiritual vitality unlike what a face actually confronting us gives" (*Ä:III*, 104/866).

Here Hegel reiterates that such painting can capture a deeper truth than reality itself. Reality, he says, "is overburdened with appearance as such, with accidental and incidental things," so that "often the greatest matter slips past us like an ordinary daily occurrence" (*Ä:III*, 104/866). But if a portrait "is done with perfect success, then we can say that [it] hits the mark better as it were, is more like the individual than the actual individual himself" (*Ä:III*, 104/866–867). Dürer, for instance, "has emphasized the features so simply, definitely, and splendidly that we think we have before us the entirety of spiritual life" (see Figure 8.1) (*Ä:III*, 104/867). By contrast, portraits should not indulge in what Hegel disparages as the fashion of the day, namely giving "all faces a smiling air" (*Ä:III*, 105/867). "[M]ere polite friendliness," he complains, only results in "mawkish insipidity" (*Ä:III*, 105/867).

Hegel then attempts a superficial historical account of painting's development. Much of his argument I have already discussed. Two points, however, bear emphasizing. The first is that it is in the supreme coloring of Italian masters such as da Vinci and Raphael (and, Hegel could have added, Bellini) that we see inner life being elevated by religion (see Color Figures 1 and 6). But "still greater" were Correggio in the "magical wizardry of chiaroscuro" and "Titian in the wealth of

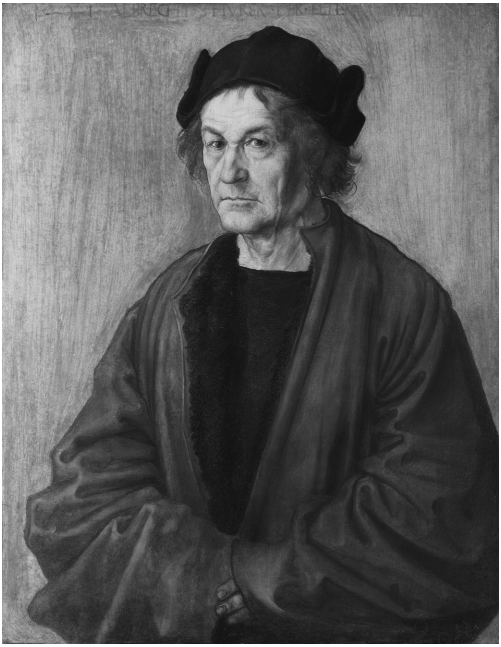

Figure 8.1 Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of Dürer's Father at 70*, 1497.

natural life, and the illuminating shading, glow, warmth, and power of colouring" (see Color Figure 5) (*Ä:III*, 123/881–882).[35] Second, Hegel returns again to his admiration for Dutch genre painting.[36] Dutch masters achieve in the everyday what earlier masters could only achieve with epic or religious topics: a vision "of what man is as man, what the human spirit and character is, what man and *this* man is." In their paintings, Hegel concludes, "we can study and get to know men and human nature" (*Ä:III*, 131/887). There is often "roguish" comedy in these paintings, but, as in Aristophanes's plays, the mischief being perpetrated is generally harmless. All too often, however, Hegel complains in anticipation of his criticism of modern comedy, modern paintings tend to present us with "something inherently vulgar, bad, and evil without any reconciling comicality" (*Ä:III*, 131/887). He concludes with another swipe at contemporary paintings: "Today however, we have all too often to put up with portraits and historical paintings which, despite all likeness to men and actual individuals, show us at the very first glance that the artist knows neither what man and human colour is nor what the forms are in which man expresses that he is man in fact" (*Ä:III*, 131/887).

6. Alienation and the Insipid: The Ends of Painting

While architecture was the absence of spirit, sculpture was spirit embodied. Painting is the beginning of spirit's withdrawal, and it has made this withdrawal sensible both through eliminating the third dimension and then, at its high point, recreating it in inner space through effects such as carnation and *sfumato* that showcase color as its essential characteristic. Rush has described this development as "painting about painting" and "about the paint as a reality unto itself."[37] More than religious or natural scenes, then, the subject matter of the painting becomes what color can do and what painting can be. This means that, with the masterpieces of Titian and Correggio, painting has reached the end of its conceptual development and exhausted its potential. There is nowhere else, conceptually, for it to go. But as with the other arts, this does not mean that there will be no more painting. Instead, it suggests that painting will be the potentially limitless development possible within the sphere of color itself. Generally, Hegel is happy to leave analysis of art's development after its conceptual end to art historians, as evidenced by his silence about architecture after thirteenth-century gothic cathedrals, as we saw in Chapter 6, or by his failure to mention his musical contemporaries, as we will see in Chapter 9. Hegel's extensive discussion of Dutch genre painting proves an exception: a case in which he more thoroughly explores how painting's essence can play out in later art.

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[35] In admiring Correggio and Titian and associating them with mastery of *chiaroscuro*, Hegel again echoes Schelling, who describes Correggio as breaking away finally from the ancients: in Correggio, Pöggeler claims, Schelling believes that "the particularly romantic [*eigentlich romantische*] principle of painting is articulated." In Schelling's final analysis, Michelangelo stands for drawing, Correggio for chiaroscuro, and Titian for color, but Raphael brings them all together. See Pöggeler (2000), 343–344.

[36] See Rush's discussion of how Hegel's theory should be applied to different kinds of Dutch painting (domestic scenes, table scenes, flowers, etc.): Rush (2018), 179–184. Rutter also suggests that the necessity needed in any painting's composition—a figure should be here and not there—is made possible by extreme *Lebendigkeit* such that, as Hegel himself says, we cannot imagine the figures being or doing otherwise. See Rutter (2010), 95.

How does Hegel's theory of painting fare beyond the seventeenth century? Answering this question has been a key part of both Pippin's and Rutter's evaluation of Hegel's theory of art. Pippin's *After the Beautiful*, I have already suggested, is a persuasive and stimulating application of Hegel's theory to Eduard Manet's mid-nineteenth-century paintings. His analysis extends beyond what I can do justice to here, but I would offer one line of critique. Pippin highlights the vacant gazes of women in Manet's *Argenteuil, In the Conservatory*, and, perhaps most famously, *The Luncheon on the Grass*. He mines Hegel's theory of recognition to analyze the social conditions necessary to produce images of such detachment. Despite thinking that Hegel has much to teach us here, he argues that Hegel was unable to foresee the kind of social alienation evident in these paintings. Hegel's inability to predict the "high challenge and low expectations" of a society that has lost so much common ground is due to Hegel's naïve belief that modern institutions could provide reconciliation.

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[37] Rush (2018), 177–178. See also Grootenboer (2018) on the relevance of Hegel's theory to the hyper-realism of a painter like Richard Estes or to photorealism.

I have said in the Introduction why I am unconvinced by this interpretation of Hegel's social and political philosophy. I have also argued that to appreciate fully what Hegel says about painting *as an individual art*, we need at least provisionally to separate the social conditions painting presupposes from the *uses of color* with which it portrays those conditions. Pippin acknowledges that there is a "complex relation between the materiality of paint itself and painterly meaning," but his emphasis falls squarely on the social alienation Manet's figures imply.[38] Be that as it may, Pippin's argument for a Hegelian analysis of Manet stands if we, as I suggested earlier, focus less on interiority as absorption and more on Hegel's insistence that interiority shows the spirit in retreat. Manet's glassy-eyed subjects indeed signal that disappearance. They have retreated, and that retreat is visible to the spectator. Manet's women share this sense of withdrawal with both Mary's distant gaze and the Dutch seamstress's self-absorption (see Color Figures 1 and 6 and Figure 5.1). The difference, it seems to me, is that Manet's subjects are required to take heightened responsibility for the interiority in question. Mary's bliss was guaranteed by Christianity; the Dutch seamstress's love for her domestic sphere was supported by a Protestantism that, although increasingly secular, still had its roots in a distant divine. Manet's interiority suggests the radical effects of secularization. Whereas Dutch subjects had to be reconciled to the banalities of everyday life, Manet's subjects, at least in Pippin's analysis, must reckon with disillusionment with the social order itself. The interiority in question refers us not to the cozy and reconciled but to the alienated and vaguely threatening, leaving us to fear what happens when the meaning behind the religious narrative evaporates. Love and bliss, new interior emotions developed in Christianity's wake, give way to darker feelings that signal the less ecstatic side of human subjectivity. Insofar as this is the case, Manet's paintings indeed give evidence of the trajectory toward humans understanding themselves as the source of spiritual meaning that Hegel suggests. More to the point, they highlight the alienation that occurs if the resulting society fails to be rational. To assess Manet fully, Hegel would still want us to examine how Manet achieves this effect through the use of color. But insofar as he does, Manet's evocations of modern withdrawal could certainly qualify as art.

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[38] Pippin (2014), 56.

What of the abstract painting that shaped art in the twentieth century? Rutter asks why Hegel was unable to predict abstraction in painting given, as we will see in the next chapter, his prescience about the development of abstract music. If we focus on Hegel's insistence on color as painting's essence, however, it seems to me that Hegel's theory can extend to abstraction. In proving that dribbled paint can evoke depth, Jackson Pollock also brings to our attention how we can see a third dimension where there is none. Mark Rothko or Helen Frankenthaler's color juxtapositions highlight how colors emerge and recede depending on light and viewer position. In this sense, both bring our attention to the inwardness that cannot be portrayed. Houlgate suggests that the main obstacle to Hegel's understanding of abstract painting would be that he would fault theorists such as Kandinsky and Greenberg for failing to see "that painting fulfills its distinctive function by creating credible images of human beings and natural objects in order to give expression to our spirit and life."[39] This again seems to me to err on the side of interpreting Hegel's aesthetic theory primarily as an extension of his practical philosophy. If we focus instead on painting's status *as painting*, we see that artists such as Pollock and Rothko accomplish this effect without including images of human beings or natural objects.

If Hegel's primary interest is in painting's ability to indicate what cannot be shown—the equivalent of Mary's higher perspective on her son's death—abstract painting can continue to do that by showing us depth where there is none. Painting's ability to depict three dimensions instead of two is key to its ability to portray subjectivity in retreat, and insofar as abstract painters accomplish this, they continue to give us a sensual experience of absence. The conventions, of course, are different: the paintings Hegel knew gave the illusion of a third dimension in a depiction of Mary or an evocation of a woman sewing. Pollock and Rothko do not pretend to create such an illusion. Nevertheless, at least on one interpretation, they prompt us to see three dimensions where there are only two and to recognize our participation in the creation of the third dimension. If anything, this is an intensification of Hegel's point that genre painting prompts us to be reconciled to the triviality of our daily lives. In abstract painting, it is not even those prosaic lives we are asked to evaluate but even more meaningless phenomena such as dribbles of paint or squares of color. Abstraction exposes our participation in the existence of the painting more fully: it reminds us that *we* are capable of seeing what is not there.

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[39] Houlgate (2000), 75. Houlgate is right, on the other hand, to imagine that Hegel would disagree with Greenberg's insistence that painting resist creating the illusion of dimensionality in order to avoid resembling sculpture. See ibid., 74–75.

A final puzzle: as we will also see in the next chapter, Hegel fears that virtuosity in music threatens music's ability to be art. By contrast, he seems to prize virtuosity in painting: he in fact claims that the "more trivial are the topics which painting takes as its subjects at this stage, in comparison with those of religion, the more does the chief interest and importance become the artist's skill in production" (*Ä:III*, 66/836). Why is this different from music? Music, as we will see, has an essential connection to feeling. Painting's task instead is to allow us to see what is not there and to give us pleasure in the awareness of this ability. Virtuosity is part of what makes this interactive effect possible, especially at the level of incarnation and *sfumato*. Virtuosity is then necessary to painting's essence, while it risks detracting from music's effect.

To return to painting's endings: aside from the conceptual end painting reaches with the carnation and *sfumato* developed by Renaissance artists, painting ends in smaller ways as well. It ends, as is so often the case, when artists lapse into imitation: when painters show faces or landscapes too exactly without drawing our attention to our subjectivity. Hegel objects, we have seen, to the "mawkish insipidity" of smiling portraits (*Ä:III*, 105/867). In the 1823 lectures, he complains about the "mildness" that reduces art to the pleasant in a way reminiscent of his objection to pleasant sculpture.[40] Rutter suggests that Hegel might have disapproved of painters like Caravaggio who neglected to reconcile contrasts within a harmonious color scheme; he apparently also objected to Caspar David Friedrich's extreme contrasts as an "affectation."[41] Here I think we see an iteration of Hegel's general claim that art should allow us to experience the kind of reconciliation that characterizes the true that is the whole; a painting that shows contrast but not resolution will not meet this criteria and so be unable to achieve art's full potential.

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[40] H23, 245.

But at its peak, painting magically shows the beginning of spirit's withdrawal. It also shows a new kind of reconciliation. In its depictions of the bliss and love that characterize Christianity or its ability to hint at the spiritual through landscapes or ordinary objects, painting embodies the identity of identity and difference at the heart of Hegel's philosophy. In tracing again the movement from depicting this unity through divine subject matter to depicting it through everyday human activities, it also embodies Hegel's idealist claims about the divine being the human. In making humans aware of their own participation in the sensing of dimension, it gives us an explicit moment of understanding ourselves as mutually determining reality. Painting also embodies the idea that there is no given: painted objects only become the objects they should be when we bring our own activity to them.

Hegel's explanation for painting's transition into music returns to his focus, within painting, on color. We saw Hegel suggest that "the single color as such does not have this gleam which it produces; it is the juxtaposition *alone* which makes this glistening and gleaming." The same is true, Hegel says, of music: "the single note is nothing by itself but produces its effect only in its relation to another, in its counterpoint, concord, modulation, and harmony" (*Ä:II*, 228/600). Because of this similarity, "painting in the pure *sfumato* and magic of its tones of colour [*in dem bloßen Duft und Zauber ihrer Farbtöne*] and their contrast, and the fusion and play of their harmony, begins to swing over to music" (*Ä:III*, 87/853).

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[41] See A20, 140; quoted in Rutter (2010), 108–109.

Hegel also points toward similarities between harmonies in color and harmonies in music, implying that the more painting explores its essence in color, the more like music it is. As the conceptual development of the individual arts continues, then, painting gives way to music.

9

The Sound of Feeling

Music

Since the perfect interpenetration of spirit and nature ended with sculpture's decline, the progression of the individual arts has tracked art's withdrawal out of the external world and into subjectivity. Painting canceled art's third dimension and took as its paradigmatic subject matter topics that also signaled a withdrawal from the world. But if the point of the romantic arts is to express subjectivity, painting can only go so far. However magical its ability to evoke form through pigment might be, "still this magic of colour is always of a spatial kind, and a pure appearance of *separated* things" (*Ä:III*, 133/889). A painting, in other words, will always be extended in space. But subjectivity in its purest sense is not spatial. The "spatial external form," Hegel continues, "is clearly no truly adequate mode of expression for the subjectivity of spirit" (*Ä:III*, 15/795).

In order to achieve a pure expression of subjectivity, art cancels the remaining two dimensions that painting preserved, breaking the connection to the external world and allowing the subject's inner life to be shown as existing "on its own account" (*Ä:III*, 133/889). The principle of subjectivity requires "the positing of the body more or less as negative in order to lift the inner life [*die Innerlichkeit*] out of externality" (*Ä:III*, 14/794). To achieve this pure expression of subjectivity, art abandons space and moves to time. In Kantian terms, it transitions from the form of outer sense to the form of inner sense.

The sensuous embodiment of time is "figurations of notes in their temporal rising and falling of sound" or, in other words, music (*Ä:III*, 15/795). Music brings our attention to time just as sculpture brought our attention to embodied shape or painting to visibility as such. It also, Hegel claims, allows us to experience the very structure of subjectivity. Music's content is "what is subjective in itself" (*Ä:III*, 136/891); its aim is to make "the inner life intelligible to itself" (*Ä:III*, 149/902). More particularly, music allows the inner life to "apprehend itself in its subjective inwardness as feeling [*Empfindung*]" (*Ä:III*, 15/795). Understanding Hegel's philosophy of music, then, requires parsing how these concepts—subjectivity, time, music, and feeling—are related to each other. It also requires showing how music's constituent parts—rhythm, harmony, and melody—transform sound into music and connecting that transformation to the structure of the self.

Historically, music's impermanence had often relegated it to a low place in the hierarchy of the arts. Philosophers focused on music's structure and its purported connection to numerology and the harmony of the spheres.[1] The modern era, however, saw a reorientation of music toward the listener. Subsequent revolutions in musical practice, for instance performances in secular rather than religious spaces, intensified this orientation and drew attention to the profound effect music could have on the subject precisely *because* of its non-representational, transient nature.[2] As subjectivity took on increasing prominence in post-Kantian philosophy, some of Hegel's contemporaries shifted toward viewing music as the highest art, Friedrich Schlegel for instance claiming that music in fact "lies higher than mere art."[3] In the generation after Hegel, Schopenhauer asserted that music, as Andrew Bowie puts it, is "the most direct, intuitive form of access to an underlying reality which is essentially resistant to discursive articulation."[4]

The early nineteenth century was also a time of major developments in music itself. In 1829, Mendelssohn revived Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in Berlin. These performances, two of which Hegel attended, set off a new evaluation of Bach's music.[5] In Vienna, Schubert transformed the potential for the intimate synthesis of poetry and music through *Lieder* while Beethoven revolutionized the symphonic form. Hegel had most likely read E. T. A. Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, in which Hoffmann urged listeners to leave behind "all feelings that can be determined by concepts in order to devote oneself to the unsayable."[6] For these and other reasons, Bowie—whose masterful book on music and modernity I will interact with throughout this chapter—claims that music's relationship to philosophy itself changed significantly during this period. By the time Hegel was writing, "music and philosophy could no longer be established solely in terms of what philosophy had to say about music, because the development of music itself influenced philosophical thinking, and vice versa."[7]

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[1] Donelan (2008), 13.

[2] See Bowie on the "turn of philosophical attention from the object to the subject that thinks about the object" that began with Descartes and accompanied changes in music praxis as well: Bowie (2009), 52. See also Donelan on the turn to the structure of self-consciousness as part of aesthetic experience inspired by Kant: Donelan (2008), 14. Kolman explores the transcendental and empirical implications of Hegel's theory of music, connecting it to Brandom's pragmatist theories of meaning: see Kolman (2014).

[3] Schlegel (1958–), 13: 57; quoted in Bowie (2009), 45.

[4] Bowie (2009), 121.

Hegel's own relationship to music was uneven. In an unusual gesture of humility, he confesses that his knowledge of music, and especially music theory, is limited (*Ä:III*, 137/893). But his attendance at concerts was regular, and his correspondence with his wife indicates that he actively participated in musical culture. His students reported their puzzlement when Hegel, having just lectured about the end of art, rushed off to attend the opera, especially if the composer was Rossini or the soprano Anna Milder-Hauptmann.[8] These musical preferences were, it seems, a source of some embarrassment to Hotho, who altered the examples Hegel cites in the lectures, downplaying Rossini especially in favor of Haydn and Mozart.[9] Neither his professed ignorance nor his apparently questionable taste, however, prevented Hegel from assigning music a crucial place among the individual arts. On the contrary, music is the art that allows us to feel nothing less than our very subjectivity.

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[5] Sallis (2011), 372–373. Hegel describes Bach as "a master whose grand, truly Protestant, robust, and yet, as it were, learned genius we have come only in recent times to admire completely" (*A:III*, 318/950).

[6] Hoffmann (1988), 23; quoted in Bowie (2009), 141.

[7] Bowie (2009), 2.

[8] Sallis (2011), 370.

[9] For an overview of this background and Hotho's alterations to the text, see ibid., 370–373 and Kwon (2012), 9–10. Many of Hotho's musical examples are not in the lecture notes, so I mostly omit them here.

1. Subjectivity, Time, Music, Feeling

Subjectivity is itself the product of negativity. In order to have a sense of itself as subjective at all, the subject must negate the external world, cancelling all three dimensions, turning inward and making itself its own object. It then recognizes that this other is itself and so cancels the negation, asserting its unity with itself. The subject at this abstract stage is, as Sallis puts it, "an empty positing of itself as other and then a cancelling of this otherness such that unity is restored."[10] As long as the subject has no content but itself, it remains an abstract series of double negations.

What is decisive for this account of subjectivity to Hegel's theory of music is, to quote Sallis again, that "the same process is at the core of time."[11] As Hegel first argued in the *Phenomenology*, time initially shares with subjectivity the problem of an endless self-cancelling series. To begin with, it is only an unstable sequence of "nows" since each time we point to "now," that now is past and a new "now" replaces it, only to be itself replaced. In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel reiterates this claim and relates it to abstract subjectivity. This "now," he says,

> still remains always the *same* in its alteration; for each point of time is a "now" just as little distinguished from the other, regarded as merely a point of time, *as the abstract self is from the object in which it cancels itself* and, since this object is only the empty self itself, in which it closes with itself. (*Ä:III*, 155/907, italics mine)

This series of "nows" is, like subjectivity, a doubled negation. What must happen for this ever-vanishing series of "nows" to become time is for the subject to synthesize them into a succession and to recognize that synthesis as its own activity.[12]

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[10] Sallis (2011), 380.

[11] Ibid.

[12] As Bowie points out, this kind of claim signals a shift from music being dismissed because of its temporality and so impermanence to an evaluation of its relation to time as positive (Bowie 2009, 86).

In synthesizing this series of nows, the self becomes active; it also becomes aware of its own activity and so of itself. The self, as Johnson puts it, thus "unifies itself as existing in time": "[B]y containing this succession of 'nows' within itself and synthesizing them into itself [the subject] unifies the stream of time and, simultaneously, unifies itself as existing through time as a constant identity."[13] Unlike these ever-vanishing "nows," Hegel says, "the self is what persists in and by itself, and its self-concentration interrupts the indefinite series of points of time and makes gaps in their abstract continuity; and in its awareness of its discrete experiences, the self recalls itself and finds itself again" (*Ä:III*, 165/914). The deep synergy between the self and time allows Hegel to claim, in an echo of Schelling, that "the actual self itself belongs to time" and even "coincides" with time.[14] As he also puts it, "The self is in time, and time is the being of the subject himself" (*Ä:III*, 156/908). Neither time nor subjectivity is a pre-existing substance: they are, as Sallis says, "nothing but the process."[15]

Art's mission throughout has been to allow us access to the nature of reality, as Hegel understands it, through the senses. In order to give sensuous embodiment to the process underlying the subject's formation and so to have sensuous access to this part of reality, Hegel says, "we need a material which for our apprehension is without stability and even as it arises and exists vanishes once more" (*Ä:III*, 133/889). Where can we find a sensuous embodiment of the subject's double negation as well as its becoming aware of itself through its synthesis of "nows" into time?

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[13] Johnson (1991), 10. Johnson seems to suggest that Hegel thinks the self is activated by music in the sense of only coming to be through music, which seems implausible to me. Surely most humans hear music, but the claim that there is no sense of self without music is too strong. In the quotation in question, Hegel says that in music, the self is *in Tätigkeit gesetzt*, suggesting that music makes us active rather than activates us in the sense of bringing us into being. The exact status of time in relation to the self is a contentious topic and one I do not have space to explore here. For other articulations of this difficult metaphysics, see Eldridge (2007), 129ff.; Hanly (2009), 366; and Sallis (2011), 380. For Hegel's often cryptic formulations in the lecture cycles, see A20, 220–223; H23, 247; and Hm28, 117–119.

[14] See Scruton (2013), 176–177; Bowie (2009), 151–152.

[15] Sallis (2011), 380. For a more detailed account of music as process and becoming in relation also to infinity, see Espiña (1997), 108ff.

Hegel's answer is music. Music's material [*Material*] is sound [*Ton*], and sound correlates to both the self's initial cycle of self-negation and to the serial "nows" that are the foundation of time.[16] It does this by being vibration. As Hegel initially argues in the *Encyclopedia*, vibration is an external phenomenon: a thing is set in motion.[17] But the sound that is produced by the vibration cancels that externality—we experience it as not in space but only internally. Hegel does not hesitate to cast this fact in terms of his own philosophical commitments:

> since the negativity into which the vibrating material enters here is on one side the cancelling of the spatial situation, a cancellation cancelled again by the reaction of the body [*ein Aufheben des räumlichen Zustandes ist, das selbst wieder durch die Reaktion des Körpers aufgehoben wird*], therefore the expression of this double negation, i.e. sound, is an externality which in its coming-to-be is annihilated again [*wieder vernichtet*] by its very existence, and it vanishes of itself. (*Ä:III*, 134/890)

Sound thus has the same basic form as both abstract subjectivity and as the unsynthesized "nows" that the subject synthesizes into a duration. It exhibits, as Sallis says, the same "instability, the outcome of the double negativity."[18] Our sense of hearing, too, embodies this double negation: the externally existing instrument that is struck or sounded—the drum or trumpet, for instance—is not what we sense; its externality is negated in the tones it produces that reach the ear. The tone then fades away; insofar as it achieves stability, it is only because it is carried forth "by the inner subjective life"—in, that is, the memory of the listener (*Ä:III*, 136/891). Hegel said of painting that the spectator "is as it were in it from the beginning, is counted in with it, and the work exists only . . . for the individual apprehending it" (*Ä:III*, 28/806): this is if anything even more true of music.

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[16] "*Ton*" can be translated as tone, sound, or note. In Hotho's 1835 edition, we read "Das Resultat dieses schwingenden Zitterns ist der *Ton*, der Material der Musik" (*Ä:III*, 134). Knox translates this as follows: "The result of this oscillating vibration is sound or a note, the material of music" (890).

[17] For the basis of Hegel's analysis of sound in the *Encyclopedia*, see *EN*, §299–302. See also Sallis (2011), 382; Bowie (2009), 130; and Hanly (2009).

[18] Sallis (2011), 375.

Even if all this is true of sounds, sounds are not yet music. The transformation of sound into music correlates, Hegel claims, to the subject's synthesis of disappearing "nows" into time. Music, as Hegel understands it, is an organized series of sounds, extended in time. The full transformation from sounds to music will require more particular determinations such as measure and harmony, but Hegel's initial point is that once sounds become related to each other through time—once the rising and falling tones are connected in our minds as a series—music proper comes into being. "[T]ime as such," he says, "is the universal element in music" (*Ä:III*, 156/907). As an experience of time, music is "an external medium which quickly vanishes and is cancelled at the very moment of expression" and so correlates to the structure of subjectivity (*Ä:II*, 261/626).

Music moves us so profoundly, then, because it allows us to experience sensuously the process through which we form our very subjectivity. "[S]ince the time of the sound is that of the subject too," Hegel suggests, sound "penetrates the self, grips it in its simplest being, and by means of the temporal movement and its rhythm sets the self in motion" (*Ä:III*, 157/908).[19] Its power is such that music can even move us physically: compelling rhythms make us want to "beat time with them and join in singing the melody; and dance music even gets into our feet; in short, music gets hold of the individual as *this* man" (*Ä:III*, 155/906).[20]

What music both accesses and provokes when it penetrates the self in this way is *Empfindung*. Here we encounter difficulties in translation. *Empfindung* can be translated as either sensation or feeling, but it is closer to sensation's connotation of physical feeling. *Gefühl*, generally translated as feeling, can likewise be used to designate a physical sensation but can also imply a mental phenomenon closer to emotion.[21] Hegel does not systematically differentiate between the two—he acknowledges that they are often used interchangeably—but in the *Encyclopedia* he suggests that *Empfindung* "is connected with sensation" [*mit der Empfindung hängt die Empfindsamkeit zusammen*] and "emphasizes rather the side of passivity—the fact that we find ourselves feeling." Later Hegel defines sensibility [*das Empfinden*] in general as "the healthy fellowship of the individual mind in the life of its bodily part." *Fühlen*, and by extension *Gefühl*, is more self-conscious: it "notes the fact that it is *we ourselves* who feel" (*EPG*, §402). But this distinction does not mean that *Empfindung* is essentially physical or unsophisticated.[22] Hegel's discussion of *Empfinden* does include a description of the physical senses (sight, touch, etc.). But it also includes "inner sensations" [*Empfindungen*] such as anger, revenge, envy, shame, and remorse as well as sensations "connected with an absolute universal" such as "right, morality, religion, the beautiful, and the true" (*EPG*, §401Z). The key to understanding *Empfindung* seems instead to be that it is "something merely present"—unreflective and unmediated—"no matter whether it originates in free mind or in the sensible world." This means that even spiritual material—complex things such as religion or beauty—can be felt in a physical way: "[t]he spiritual, rational, lawful, ethical and religious content in assuming the form of feeling [*Empfindung*], receives the shape of an object of sense," Hegel claims, thinking perhaps of the physical blushing prompted by shame or a gut feeling that something is wrong (*EPG*, §400Z). In such moments, the self "*only* feels, does not as yet seize itself as a subject confronting an object": it is, at least initially, only aware of itself, feeling (*EPG,* §499Z).

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[19] Other than this comment, Hegel seems uninterested in the vexing question of in what sense music can be said to move. See Scruton (2013), 174–175. See also, however, Goehr (2008), 16–18 on Hegel and music's conceptual movement.

[20] Compare Schleiermacher's claim that feeling "relates to the specific existence of individuality" (Schleiermacher 1931, 34, quoted in Bowie 2009, 162).

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[21] On this question, see De Vries (1863), Sanguinetti (2016), and Howard (2013). In this literature on *Empfindung* versus *Gefühl*, no mention is made of Hegel's theory of music. I do not have space to develop this point here, but a better understanding of Hegel's theory of music could likely help resolve this debate. Hegel is often understood as critical of feeling in its immediacy, given his objections especially to feeling's role in religion. Understanding how feeling functions in music would also better contextualize those criticisms. Hegel's own emphasis on *Empfindung* varies across the lecture cycles: see, for instance, A20, 224; H23, 247; K26, 367; and Hm28, 118.

[22] See also the discussion of *Empfindung* and *Gemüt* at Kwon (2012), 11–12.

And indeed, the crucial point about feeling (or sensation) for Hegel's theory of music is its relation to abstract subjectivity. At the level of the subject's making itself its own object, cancelling that object, and then retrieving a sense of itself in this cancellation, the subject's only concern is itself. Its content is itself, or the "immediate self-sufficiency of the self and the self's relation to itself without any externality at all" (*Ä:III*, 150/902). Its self-identity, as Sallis says, "remains abstract and empty; it remains undifferentiated feeling."[23] But what does Hegel mean by this? By claiming that music is undifferentiated feeling, does he mean that music can have no content? Where does Hegel's theory place him in debates about whether music can have content and, if so, what kind?[24]

In our everyday lives, feelings generally have content in the sense that we can be sad about a death or proud of an accomplishment. But sometimes, music elicits feelings that lack content in this sense. When music makes us sad, we need not be sad *about* anything: we feel sadness in its most unmediated form. In such cases, Hegel suggests, the feeling subject's object is thus only itself. To repeat: its object is itself, feeling. In yet another formulation, Hegel says that feeling is "the widening subjectivity of the self which does proceed to have an objective content but still leaves this content remaining in this immediate self-sufficiency of the self and the self's relation to itself without any externality at all" (*Ä:III*, 150/902).

Music's intimate connection to the self means that it can provoke a wide range of particular feelings that allow the self to feel itself. Hegel's list again makes clear that *Empfindung* extends beyond simple, physical sensations to complex, spiritual experiences: music can elicit particular *Empfindungen* such as "all nuances of cheerfulness and serenity, the sallies, moods, and jubilations of the soul, the degrees of anxiety, misery, mourning . . . of awe, worship, love, etc." (*Ä:III*, 150/903). Music thus allows us to experience the feelings that painting could only hint at; it expresses interiority in a way painting could not.

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[23] Sallis (2011), 380.

[24] For contemporary positions on this question as they relate to Hegel's philosophy, see Eldridge's excellent overview at Eldridge (2007), 119 and Bowie's extensive discussion of Peter Kivy in Bowie (2009), Chapter 1.

In addressing only the feeling self, music also differentiates itself from the other art that employs sound, namely poetry. Poetry's words are arbitrary signs: the word *pearl* has no intrinsic connection to pearls themselves. Tones, by contrast, are not signs.[25] Music is thus sound as an end in itself and gives access to unmediated feeling in a way poetry cannot.

But Hegel's assertion of a deep connection between music and feeling risks suggesting a problematic immediacy. It can seem that kinds of emotions—cheerfulness, misery, fear—simply exist, independent of us, and then music stimulates them. If true, this would suggest a "given" that would undermine Hegel's claim that humans fundamentally and mutually form their reality. It would also seem obtuse during an age in which Herder and others were suggesting that music was capable, as Bowie says, "of revealing new aspects of being, rather than just means of re-presenting what is supposedly already there."[26] This newness was present in music itself: precisely at the time Hegel was writing, Bowie claims, Beethoven was turning from validating familiar emotions to channeling new experiences of, for instance, turbulence and exaltation. Worse: if Hegel is suggesting that the self exists through feeling emotions and those emotions are given, is the nature of subjectivity simply given? This would seem problematic since, to quote Bowie again, the "feeling of self" is also "linked to important social considerations, as the fact that it emerges via engagement with music as part of the objective social world indicates."[27] Can Hegel's theory reflect this aspect of mutual formation among music, subjectivity, and feeling?

Hegel himself, as we saw in the previous chapter, argued that the modern world produced new feelings: Christian love and bliss are two examples. These new emotions resulted from historical, religious, and cultural changes themselves brought about by humans' search for meaning within such change. Presumably, then, he is open to the idea that music can cause us to feel these new emotions. As we do so, our sense of subjectivity will be formed by them. Our subjectivity, in other words, must also be responsive to this kind of change: the subject's own sense of itself shifts as what it feels shifts. Bowie suggests that "[s]ignificant modern music" "confronts the most difficult issues in society concerning, for example, ineluctable change, the disintegration of traditional forms of order and the precariousness of new forms of order, the nature of time, the fragility of the self."[28] Insofar as it does so, music responds to social transformations. What the subject feels when it hears such music changes, as then does the subject itself. These developments in subjectivity in turn affect social conditions that themselves affect what is possible for humans emotionally. In this way, the relation among music, feelings, and the self is a paradigmatic case of the mutual formation Hegel thinks is the foundation of reality.[29] The feelings themselves are not immediate but rather the product of these complex interrelations; but our *feeling* of them can be immediate in the sense that it has no object but corresponds simply to the abstract self.

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[25] For discussion, see Hanly (2009).

[26] Bowie (2009), 4. See also Herder's *Does Painting or Music Have a Greater Effect? A Divine Colloquy* as discussed in Gjesdal (2017), 53.

[27] Bowie (2009), 142.

Whatever their intersubjective, world-responsive nature, the feelings that music evokes will remain imprecise. Unlike poetry, which gives "an external illustration to ideas and thoughts," music "must bring home to our feelings the simple essence of some subject-matter in such note-relationships as are akin to the inner nature of the subject" (*Ä:III*, 151/904). Hegel does not deny that some music will bring particular content to mind: sorrowful music can prompt ideas about death; so-called program music can remind us of natural phenomena such as water or storms. But in its purest form, feeling remains "the shrouding of the content," a concealment of whatever subject matter may have occasioned it (*Ä:III*, 150/903). The indeterminateness of music's feeling, however, is not a detriment: if it were more determinate, music would no longer have access to subjectivity's structure. When Bowie suggests that Hegel cannot account for the fact that "[s]ome passages of Bruckner's symphonies, for example, may evoke mountain vistas" since, according to Hegel, such experience will still be "indeterminate and vague," I think he misjudges the value Hegel attributes to indeterminateness. It is true, as we will see in the next chapter, that Hegel calls poetry the highest art and that this status has to do with its being more determinate than music. But music is still indispensable for precisely its ability to evoke the indeterminacy necessary for us to feel ourselves in Hegel's deepest sense. If there were no such music, there would be no opportunity for feeling the self in this way.

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[28] Ibid., 136.

[29] I would take Hegel then to support Bowie's basic thesis that the "very fact that music changes its nature in relation to the development of human societies, so that, for example, certain kinds of sound either begin to be or cease to be culturally acceptable, cannot be understood without seeing music holistically as part of a world, rather than as an object" (ibid., 32).

2. Time, Harmony, and Melody

Just as Hegel considered the materials that best produced other arts' desired effect, he now considers the components music uses to enable us to feel our subjectivity.[30] The first is the "purely temporal aspect of music" including tempo [*Zeitmaß*], measure [*Takt*, which Knox translates as "bar"], and rhythm. In its purest form, time is essentially "both a uniform stream and also an inherently undifferentiated duration" (*Ä:III*, 164/913). But as undifferentiated duration, it cannot be sensed: in order to be sensed, time must be interrupted. The need for this interruption again closely correlates to the development of the self: the self, Hegel says, "is not an indeterminate continuity and unpunctuated duration, but only becomes a self by concentrating its momentary experiences and returning into itself from them" (*Ä:III*, 164/914). But, he continues,

> this concentration of experiences essentially implies an *interruption* of the purely indefinite process of changes which is what time was . . . [T]he self is what persists in and by itself, and its self-concentration interrupts the indefinite series of points of time and makes gaps in their abstract continuity; and in its awareness of its

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[30] Compare A20, 224–225; H23, 249–250; K26, 362–363; and Hm28, 119–121.

> discrete experiences, the self recalls itself and finds itself again and thus is freed from mere self-externalization and change. (*Ä:III*, 165/914)

In other words: for music to parallel the fact that the self becomes aware of itself through interrupting its otherwise undifferentiated unity, it, too, must interrupt time's otherwise undifferentiated duration. Music must "determine [time] more closely, give it a measure, and order its flow by the rule of such a measure" (*Ä:III*, 164/914). In order for this interruption to have its effect, it must also be regular: an "unregulated running riot contradicts the unity of the self just as much as the abstract forward movement does, and the self can find itself again and be satisfied in this diversified definiteness of duration only if single *quanta* are brought into one unity" (*Ä:III*, 165/915). A piece's time signature, bars, and individual notes' duration (half notes, quarter notes, etc.) all contribute to achieving this regularity and so making the experience of music possible.

In a clear example of Hegel's claim that art is pleasurable because it gives us sensuous experience of our own mutually formative capacities, he claims that music helps us sense how we both form the time that defines music and are formed by that time ourselves:

> But the satisfaction which the self acquires, owing to the bar, in this rediscovery of itself is all the more complete because the unity and uniformity does not pertain either to time or the notes in themselves; it is something which belongs solely to the self and is inserted into time by the self for its own self-satisfaction. (*Ä:III*, 166/915)

This kind of regularity, in short, is not found in nature—in the rotation of heavenly bodies or changing of seasons or movements of animals. Rhythm instead, Hegel says, "proceeds from the spirit alone" even more than do the "regular fixed magnitudes of architecture, analogies for which may more easily be found in nature" (*Ä:III*, 167/916).[31]

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[31] Compare Ewton's analysis of A. W. Schlegel on natural rhythms such as breathing and heartbeat as the foundation of music, dance, and poetry: Ewton (1972), 23. The reference is to Schlegel's *Briefe über Poesie, Silbenmaß und Sprache*: Schlegel (1846–7), VII, 98–154, here 150ff. Novalis also emphasized the rhythms of natural

This is not to suggest that the beat should be followed rigidly: part of music's ability to mirror Hegel's idea of freedom is in its ability to use norms—a time signature, for instance—as a foundation but to determine independently the extent to which those norms should be followed. Insofar as rhythm provides a framework for this kind of interpretation, it gives us the kind of pleasure Hegel associates with the experience of art.

Music's second component is harmony. In contrast to rhythm's emphasis on notes' relation to each other in time, harmony is the "realm of notes as such" (*Ä:III*, 171/919). Based on the length and construction of the instrument sounded, the resulting note will have a certain pitch. It can then be combined with other pitches to form scales, intervals, or chords, all of which are related in mathematical ways.[32] Here music resembles architecture: through key signatures, dissonances, and resolutions, it makes the laws of harmony audible the way architecture makes the laws of gravity visible. Music thus enables a profound synthesis of apparently opposed aspects of the subject's life: "what dominates in music is at once the soul and profoundest feeling and the most rigorous mathematical laws so that it unites in itself two extremes which easily become independent of one another" (*Ä:III*, 139/894). Hegel also considers different instruments and their respective qualities, concluding that just as carnation—the painter's ability to evoke the translucency of human skin—was the pinnacle of painting, the human voice is the most perfect instrument. It "unites in itself the character of wind and string instruments because in this case it is a column of air which vibrates, while through the muscles there also comes into play the principle of tightly stretched strings" (*Ä:III*, 175/922).[33] The human voice embodies music's essence in another

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phenomena—seasons, times of day—as crucial to human experience. See Novalis (1978), 401, quoted in Bowie (2009), 147.

[32] On the philosophical history of chords, and especially E. T. A. Hoffmann's analysis of their importance, see Scruton (2013), 175. See also Sallis's reference to Hegel's discussion of intervals, scales, and tones in the *Philosophy of Nature* at Sallis (2011), 370. Compare Goehr's analysis of Schelling on rhythm: Goehr (2008), 54–57.

[33] For a fascinating discussion of the emergence of the voice in the *Philosophy of Nature*, see Hanly (2009).

way: it is the "sounding of the soul itself," "the sound which the inner life has in its own nature for the expression of itself" (*Ä:III*, 175/922).

But it is melody, music's third component, that allows time and harmony to form a unity and provides them "the basis for the first genuinely free development and unification of the notes" (*Ä:III*, 185/929). Whether harmony or melody should dominate in music had been thoroughly discussed by Rousseau and Condillac over a century earlier; Hegel comes down definitively on the side of melody.[34] Melody is the "poetic element in music, the language of the soul, which pours out into the notes the inner joy and sorrow of the heart" (*Ä:III*, 185/929).[35] More than time or harmony, melody also brings the listener's participation in music's existence to our attention. A melody's coherence exists only if there is a listener through whose memory notes are linked to form a meaningful succession.[36] It thus models our mutually formative categories in a way that is, I have argued, fundamental to Hegel's idealism.

But Hegel makes even broader claims for melody. In its outpouring of joy and sorrow, he says, melody "mitigates and rises above the *natural* force of feeling by turning the inner life's present transports into an apprehension of itself" (*Ä:III*, 185/929). Hegel previously suggested that in general, music, through "necessary proportions" both temporal and harmonic, provides "a more secure ground and basis on which the inner life then moves and develops in a freedom made concrete only through that necessity" (*Ä:III*, 161/911). The self is consequently not just "gripped" by music but "elevated" and "activated" by it (*Ä:III*,

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[34] See Bowie (2009), 59. For other attempts to make sense of this constellation of concepts, see Alperson and Donougho (1988), Sallis (2011), and Johnson (1991).

[35] Compare H23, 250–251.

[36] The coherence of musical development and the fact that we are capable of hearing it—a phenomenon which Hegel discusses under the heading of melody but which is relevant to music more broadly—is another enormous topic. See Bowie (2009), 63, 87. Adorno calls music's combination of logic and lack of assertion "*the logic of judgementless synthesis*," which in turn explains the more pernicious side of music's power (Adorno 1993, 32). See also Scruton's account of the "acusmatic" attitude that allows us to hear sounds "not as events in physical space, but as events occurring in a space of their own, related to one another by the forces that govern musical movement." As Scruton points out, the ability to hear sounds as tones also requires a "listening culture" that was itself evolving dramatically during Hegel's lifetime (Scruton 2013, 177–178). For an exemplary analysis of such a culture, see Johnson (1995).

155/906). Melody is, apparently, primarily responsible for this phenomenon: "Only as this movement, which never runs off into vagueness but is articulated in itself and returns into itself," Hegel claims, "does melody correspond to that free self-subsistence of subjective life which it is its task to express. In this way alone does music in its own element of inwardness perfect the immediate expression of the inner life" which is obedient to laws but also lifts "the soul to the apprehension of a higher sphere" (*Ä:III*, 190/933). Hegel gives no explicit argument for how this catharsis works. Nor does he acknowledge the difficulty music's elevation of the self presents for his theory of its role in the self's very existence. If music makes the subject feel its subjectivity, how, for instance, can it also elevate the subject *beyond* that feeling? Nevertheless, Hegel claims that since music allows the self to apprehend itself, it is able to "liberat[e] the heart . . . from the pressure of joys and sorrows" (*Ä:III*, 185/929–930).

Despite his lack of argument, we can imagine that melody facilitates this release through a familiar emergence of freedom through constraint.[37] Melody is anchored to both regulated time and harmonic structure. But it does not thereby "forgo its freedom at all; it only liberates itself from the subjectivity of arbitrary caprice in fanciful developments and bizarre changes and only acquires its true independence precisely in this way" (*Ä:III*, 186/930). To break away completely would be "to turn away from itself and be untrue to itself," but, at the same time, the "measure [*Takt*], rhythm, and harmony are, taken by themselves, only abstractions which in their isolation have no musical worth, but can acquire a genuinely musical existence only through and within the melody" (*Ä:III*, 187/931).

3. Singing, Playing, and Performing

Attempts to define music's essential nature face a particular difficulty since music is capable of including another artistic medium, namely text. When music incorporates text, what should their relationship to each other be? Which is more truly musical, vocal music or independent (textless) music? The debate regarding the relative merits of each has its modern roots in analyses of the origins of both language and music. Rousseau, Condillac, Johann Wilhelm Ritter, and Herder all deliberated whether language's development out of music constituted a tragic loss or pure gain in the development of human knowledge.[38] In Hegel's own time, E. T. A. Hoffmann had taken up the question in a series of dialogues and essays.[39] In his review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Hoffmann had concluded that Beethoven's ability to evoke meaning without words showed text-based music to be necessarily limiting. Around the same time and in a similar vein, Tieck began to conceptualize an aesthetics of "absolute music."[40]

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[37] Compare Eldridge (2007), 129.

Hegel's contribution to this debate is guided by his conviction that music is paradigmatically about feeling, and that the feeling evoked by music has a unique character that accesses subjectivity directly. How can music retain this quality while including a text that presumably conveys ideas? We might think, Hegel says, that the relationship between text and music resembles the relationship between sculpture and architecture: just as architecture provides a structure for sculpture, music provides a frame for text. And indeed, "music by being sung word can only have the task, so far as music can execute it, of making the musical expression adequate to this subject-matter" (*Ä:III*, 191/934). The task of music is "to immerse ideas into th[e] element of sound, in order to produce them anew for feeling and sympathy" (*Ä:III*, 149/902). At the same time, if we are to think of music *as music*, the truth, Hegel says, is the reverse: "the text is the servant of the music and [the text] has no worth other than creating for our minds a better idea of what the artist [i.e., the composer] has chosen as the subject of his work" (*Ä:III*, 191/934). When poetry is judged

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[38] See Bowie (2009), 58. Bowie charts the development from eighteenth-century theories for which "there is always a verbal equivalent of what music says" through the discrediting of such theories at the end of that century (ibid., 58ff., 147). See also Guyer's discussion of Herder's argument against Lessing regarding the respective essences of music and poetry at Guyer (2014), 383.

[39] See Brown (2006).

[40] Bowie (2009), 76.

as part of a work of music, that is, its worth consists in its ability to help evoke the feeling that is music's essence. Music in turn signals its independence from the text by "not apprehend[ing] this content [of the text] at all in the way that a libretto makes it intelligible, but on the contrary it masters a medium other than that of perception and ideas" (*Ä:III*, 191/934).

Bowie suggests that Hegel thus "assumes that the meaning of music with a text is just the meaning of the text which the music accompanies, plus whatever feelings constitute its necessarily indeterminate 'content.' "[41] But Hegel's two examples of ways music can remain true to its essence even as it accompanies text suggest that matters are more complicated. The first example is sacred music, which expresses for instance suffering and death not as "a *subjective* feeling or emotion of sympathy or individual human grief at these events, but as it were the thing itself" (*Ä:III*, 192/935). The idea of Jesus's death can evoke emotions, as can its depiction in painting or sculpture. But because of music's intimate relation to subjectivity, what listeners feel when hearing music incorporating a textual account of Jesus's crucifixion is much more tied to their own existence. The listener "should live through the inmost meaning of this death and this divine suffering, immerse himself in it with his whole heart so that now the thing becomes in him something apprehended which extinguishes everything else and fills him with this one thing" (*Ä:III*, 193/935).[42] Calling this effect "just the meaning of the text" plus feeling, as Bowie does, seems unduly reductive: the feeling generated is unique to music's capacities, allowing the subject to feel pure grief itself rather than grief caused by an idea. This, I think, is connected to the physical connotations of *Empfindung*, or the fact that music's effects can be felt *physically* in a way made possible in few, if any, of the other arts. Hegel indeed says that music "develops the *inward*

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[41] Ibid., 132–133.

[42] Aside from these discussions of settings of the Passion, Hegel makes no claims about music similar to his claim that Christianity and painting needed each other to express themselves fully. This is curious, given that Hegel so closely associates music with subjectivity and subjectivity with Christianity. Hegel in fact makes almost no claims about music's history, possibly because of the difficulty of recreating music written before modern musical notation.

side of a topic already set before our minds by the libretto," but it does not only augment feelings already associated with the idea; its feelings structure the subject's very self-feeling and so achieve a different status (*Ä:III*, 193/936).

The second example is when music is able to make us feel particular emotions prompted by a text describing a character or situation. We might weep at a poem describing a lover's death; music, too, Hegel says, can prompt such a reaction. But more than the other arts, music's direct access to the listener's subjectivity "softens, pacifies, and idealizes the sympathetic feeling to which [the listener] finds himself disposed" (*Ä:III*, 193/935). Music sets "limits to the roving freedom of thinking . . . to a passage [*Hinaussein*] beyond the specific topic at issue, because it keeps the heart firmly to one particular thing, engages it in that topic, and, within that sphere, moves and occupies the feelings" (*Ä:III*, 193/935–936). While a text might stimulate our feelings, music, because of its deep connection to feeling as the basis of subjectivity, can also loosen its grip on us. Here Hegel reiterates, again without argument, that music enables an edifying catharsis: a way for us to experience and purge our emotions and so master them.

When music incorporates a text, then, it must not "sink to such servitude" by producing "merely the intellectual trick of using musical means of expression for the truest possible indication of a subject-matter" (*Ä:III*, 195/938). It must avoid evoking the waterfalls or bird songs or storms described in the text. Instead, it should prompt a *feeling* appropriate to those images. The best composers "produce nothing alien to the words," but they also do not neglect "either the free outpouring of notes or the undisturbed march and course of the composition which is therefore there *on its own account and not on account of its words only*" (*Ä:III*, 196/938, italics mine). This means, counterintuitively, that the text in question should not be too good. Poetry set to music should not "come forward with a claim to validity of its own," Hegel says: "if the musician is to have free scope, the poet must not try to be admired as a poet" (*Ä:III*, 147/900). Italians are particularly skilled at the mediocre poetry that can be beautifully set to music, Hegel thinks; Schiller's poems, he claims even in the age of

Schubert, “prove very awkward and useless for musical composition” (*Ä:III*, 147/901).[43]

The relationship between text and music can also be analyzed in developmental stages. The first is “strictly melodic” songs that are closest to natural vocal expressions of grief or joy but which, through music’s structure, are able to shape and then relieve this feeling, ensuring that “even a lament gives us the most blissful tranquility” (*Ä:III*, 198/939) and that the “feeling, the resounding soul” is able “to become explicit and to enjoy itself in its expression” (*Ä:III*, 196/938).[44] In such songs, thematic development in the text is not important. What is essential is that it have “one and the same feeling pervading the whole, and therefore it strikes above all *one* chord of the heart [*Gemütston*]” (*Ä:III*, 201/941). But music cannot stop here: such content is “too general and abstract” and risks being “empty and trivial” (*Ä:III*, 200/940). In the second stage, therefore, “the meaning of the words in its precise specific character is stamped on the notes and it determines whether they are high or low, emphasized or not” (*Ä:III*, 202/942). The result is the recitative, a kind of “*declamation* in sound, closely tied to the words alike in their meaning and their syntactical connection” (*Ä:III*, 202/942). Finally, in the third case, the vagueness of simple melody is combined with the more explicit recitative, and songs become “as much declamatory as melodious” (*Ä:III*, 204/944). What is needed to make this synthesis possible is a kind of poetry that “is true, extremely simple, indicating the situation and the feeling in few words” (*Ä:III*, 207/946).

Mistakes are possible on both the textual and the musical side. Hegel disapproves of music that sets “so-called ‘romantic’ poetry” which “glories in banality, silliness, and vulgarity,” not to mention “envy, debauchery, [and] devilish wickedness” (*Ä:III*, 206/945). He is also not impressed by music that juxtaposes emotional extremes. Such contrasts “toss us from one side to another without giving us any unity"; they risk being "thoroughly unmelodious and unmusical" and being "reduced even to the misuse of discords" (*Ä:III*, 209/948). In all these considerations, "the victory shall always be given to the melody as the all-embracing unity," Hegel writes (*Ä:III*, 209/947): "musical beauty lies in the fact that, while an advance is made from pure melody to characterization, still within this particularization melody is always preserved as the carrying and unifying soul" (*Ä:III*, 210/948).

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[43] Ironically, the most famous of Schiller’s poems that has been set to music, namely his “Ode to Joy” in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, was indeed considered by Schiller himself to be a mediocre poem and so perhaps makes Hegel’s point for him. See Hart (2009).

[44] Discussion of simple song in this sense can be found in Rousseau and in Herder: see Bowie (2009), 66ff.

But in order to reach its full potential, music must take on a form that does not simply develop feelings in conjunction with poetry but that does so solely on its own terms. As Hegel puts it: "if this subjective experience is to gain its full due in music likewise, then music must free itself from a given text and draw entirely out of itself its content" (*Ä:III*, 214/952). The resulting independent music [*selbständige Musik*] can echo abstract subjective experience that, as we have already seen Hegel argue, is "undetermined by any fixed content" and so cannot be expressed in words (*Ä:III*, 214/952). The "proper sphere" of music's independence is thus instrumental music in which the music restricts itself "to its own, its very own, sphere" (*Ä:III*, 216/953). Because such music—quartets, symphonies, and so on—have no text, they are "addressed to feeling generally" (*Ä:III*, 216/953).

But here, where music comes into its own, a difference between experts and dilettantes begins to emerge.[45] General audiences, Hegel claims, prefer vocal music. By contrast, the expert "who has at his fingers' ends the inner musical relations between notes and instruments, loves instrumental music" (*Ä:III*, 216/953–954). To please these experts, the composer might be tempted "not to trouble himself with any such content and make the principal thing the purely musical structure of his work and the ingenuity of such architecture" (*Ä:III*, 217/954). Music risks losing its connection to feeling and becoming too much a product of the understanding. But this worry does not, contrary to Bowie's assertion, cause Hegel to claim that "the significance of independent (textless) music is available only to the expert, others gaining satisfaction via the content of the words that music accompanies."[46] Instead, it suggests that instrumental music accomplishes music's potential best when it balances both: "Music is therefore more profound when the composer gives the same attention even in instrumental music to both sides, to the expression of content (true, a rather vague one) and to the musical structure" (*Ä:III*, 217/954).[47] Absent this balance, the composer risks lapsing into what sounds like subjective humor: into "fancies, conceits, interruptions, ingenious freaks, deceptive agitations" and, in short, "extraordinary effects" (*Ä:III*, 218/955).

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[45] Compare A20, 228–229; H23, 251; K26, 368; and Hm28, 122.

Finally, Hegel acknowledges that music must be performed. Unlike sculptures or paintings that exist independently, music must be perpetually recreated. It is, after all, based in sound, and sound quickly dissipates. As Sallis points out, the fact that music, at least traditionally conceived, requires artists that have both technical skill and spiritual feeling also reinforces the deep connection with particular subjects that is part of music's essence.[48] Performance can itself take on a variety of forms that begin to track the poetic genres discussed in Chapter 11. The first resembles epic poetry: the performer's personality recedes, allowing the subject matter to dominate. Such performers submit "entirely to the character of the work and intend to be only an obedient instrument" (*Ä:III*, 219/956). The second mirrors lyric poetry in that the performer shows herself in the music, developing and enhancing it according to her own talents. This is the realm of virtuosity, whether of the artist's own voice or of her use of her instrument. The virtuoso's ability to play the apparently impossible can be very impressive, but Hegel issues a familiar warning: if the performance goes so far "that subjective virtuosity in the production may as such be made the sole centre and content of the enjoyment," our focus shifts from our feelings to the performer, and the music will not prompt the feeling its essence is to inspire (*Ä:III*, 159/909).

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[46] Bowie (2009), 133. Another indication that Bowie mischaracterizes Hegel's attitude to music's impermanence is his claim that the "entanglement of Hegel's philosophical claim, that truth depends on the elimination of what makes music mere transience, with the claims of the music that is produced in Hegel's period gives us indications of how to assess the relationship between music and philosophy" (ibid., 135). Hegel does not think music's transience should be "eliminated"; it should instead be preserved within the greater development of the arts.

[47] Individual lecture cycles suggest, as Kwon argues, that Hegel's attitude toward instrumental music was ultimately ambivalent. Kwon gives a summary of each lecture cycle on the topic: Kwon (2012), 14–20.

[48] Sallis (2011), 381.

4. From the Conceptual to the Virtuosic: The Ends of Music

Music ends conceptually when its essence is accomplished: when, like painting relying on color alone without drawing as its basis, it consists of sound alone without an accompanying text. Painting reached a point where, as Rush says, it was primarily concerned with exploring its own foundations; music ends when it reaches a similar point.[49] There is nowhere further for music to go, conceptually, although it can infinitely combine and explore its constituent parts, following its potential all the way, for instance, to the atonality of the twentieth century. As with all the arts, then, this conceptual ending does not mean that music can no longer be made or even that all music must now be instrumental. As long as music allows us to sense our subjectivity through feelings that it then enables us to reflect on and shape, it can fulfill its mission.

The development of music after his lifetime, however, suggests that Hegel's vision was especially limited as regards music. His failure to mention Beethoven is perhaps explained by his concern that music including the extremes of, say, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony will provoke strong emotions but be unable to resolve them—perhaps not unlike his objection to the unresolved contrast in Caspar David Friedrich's paintings. But it is a glaring omission and one that suggests Hegel's inability to predict how precisely Beethoven's music would become evidence of feeling's power.[50] It is not known whether he had heard any Schubert, but surely the intimate melodies Schubert wrote for Schiller's poetry challenge Hegel's interdiction against setting excellent poetry to music.[51] Looking far into the twentieth century, we might imagine him fascinated by John Cage's attempts to bring our attention to both unmusical sound and to silence as ways of being aware of time and distinguishing our identities through time. But unless such music provokes a feeling, as opposed to intellectual stimulation or curiosity, it would not fulfil the role Hegel assigns to music.

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[49] There is a significant difference between these two endings, which is that music comes into its own by separating from poetry; there is no similar separation when painting reaches its essence. This is a consequence of music's unique ability to accompany another artistic medium in the first place.

[50] On Adorno's famous criticism of both Beethoven and Hegel on this topic, see Adorno (1993).

Much contemporary music, however, is entirely capable of fulfilling this role. Earlier, I quoted Bowie's claim that some contemporary music confronts "the disintegration of traditional forms of order and the precariousness of new forms of order, the nature of time, the fragility of the self."[52] Perhaps music's exploring its own foundations is itself an evocation of our anxiety about foundations themselves. Insofar as what such music does is allow us to *feel* the anxiety of change and then process and form that feeling, such music would meet Hegel's criteria. Part of my overall argument has been that even Hegel thought art still had much to do. Music, I think, fulfills its part of art's ongoing task in the modern world by allowing us to continue to feel ourselves, sometimes through emotions that are themselves evidence of our anxieties and our shifting social and historical realities.

Music's more prosaic endings occur when composers fail to communicate spiritual meaning and instead write music that encourages only virtuosity or skillfulness.[53] It ends, too, when it becomes only the servant of ideas, imitating bird songs or waterfalls in too literal an evocation the world beyond feeling. Presumably, it will also be inferior when it provokes only the sentimentality or self-indulgent feelings Hegel disliked in his romantic contemporaries. And while we will never know how Hegel himself justified his post-lecture dash across *Unter den Linden* from the lecture hall to the opera house, I think there are two possibilities. One is that he thought Rossini's operas articulated the Idea in sensuous form and so were a genuine instance of art. Given what he says about opera generally, as we will see in the next chapter, I think this is unlikely. Instead, my guess is that his love of opera indulged another human desire entirely: the desire to be entertained. If art's ending does not imply the end of enjoyment, his love of opera would be fully compatible with what his students knew of his philosophy.

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[51] Compare Kaminsky (1962), 124 and Bungay (1984), 141.

[52] Bowie (2009), 136. See Kwon's conclusion that Hegel suggests that dissonance is essential to modern music at Kwon (2012), 22.

[53] Compare Sallis (2011), 378.

Perhaps music's most acute risk is becoming technical and inaccessible to feeling. Hegel apparently feared this development even in religious music. Not unlike his criticism of Protestantism's box-like churches, he complains that, Bach's "learned genius" notwithstanding, "now in Protestantism music is more of a scholarly exercise than a living production" (*Ä:III*, 212/950). As regards concert music, Hegel does appear prescient: he foresaw that so-called classical music's development would make it difficult for an average listener to *feel* in the way Hegel thinks music must make us feel.[54] Such music, Hegel worries, "loses power over the whole inner life, all the more so as the pleasure it can give relates to only one side of the art, namely bare interest in the purely musical element in the composition and its skillfulness, a side of music which is for connoisseurs only and scarcely appeals to the general human interest in art" (*Ä:III*, 149/899). In such cases, Hegel suggests, music is "untrue to art" (H23, 251–252).[55]

How then does successful music meet art's mandate by making the Idea available to sense? Part III of Hegel's philosophy of art concerns our understanding as mutually forming the world we live in. Architecture allowed us to understand ourselves as sensing external space; sculpture enabled us to experience embodied individuality; painting enabled an awareness of inner space. Music instead allows us to understand ourselves as not only conceiving of time but existing in time and coming into existence through time. In providing a close parallel with the way the self synthesizes itself in time, music allows us to experience our own self-determining essence. It is, as some commentators have pointed out, thus an experience of freedom.[56]

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[54] Whether this is true also of so-called pop music—or hip-hop, or rap—is of course another matter. Certainly, such music prompts feelings, and its rhythmic structure can make us feel ourselves in time. Whether it would meet Hegel's other criteria for art would require more argumentation than I have space for here.

[55] Compare A20, 228; K26, 371–373; and Hm28, 122–124.

Music contributes to art's expression of the Idea in other ways as well. More than other arts, it makes us conscious that it exists only because we are there to hear it, facilitating our understanding of our participation in reality. It counters architecture's exteriority with profound interiority, thus ensuring that difference is synthesized into the unity of the individual arts. By combining harmonies with dissonance into a unified whole, music itself models the unity of unity and division. It resists the given even more than did painting, not only because it is not physically touchable but because it quickly fades. While painting is *Schein* in the sense that it shows a dimension that was not there, music appears—*erscheint*—and then disappears, allowing us to contemplate the transient nature of reality itself. This transience will also be evident in the next individual art, namely poetry. But poetry's basis in language reorients it toward ideas, leaving music still dominant, among the arts, in the realm of the feeling.

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[56] Eldridge (2007), 128–129; Sallis (2011), 378.

10

The Language of Inner Imagination

Poetry

All art, Hegel has repeatedly claimed, is in one sense poetical. The poetic at its most basic level is simply “something made, produced by a human who has taken it into his imagination [*in seine Vorstellung aufgenommen*], pondered it, and issued it by his own activity out of his imagination” (*Ä:I*, 214/162). This process—taking, pondering, issuing—achieves a mutual transformation that, I have argued, results in an embodiment of the Idea, the interrelated totality of the true that is the whole. It is, in short, an instance of the Ideal. The Ideal, the poetic, and art are, in this sense, synonyms: artistic “making” [*Machen*], Hegel says, is simply the “the poetic and the ideal in a formal sense”; “the truly poetical element [*das echt Poetische*] in art is just what we have called the Ideal” (*Ä:I*, 216/164, 213/161). But in the final section of “The System of the Individual Arts,” Hegel turns to poetry in a narrower sense. In this chapter, I will outline his theory of what we might call poetry proper. In the next chapter, I will discuss its three genres: epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry.

Many of the questions raised about poetry during Hegel’s lifetime were similar to those asked about the other arts.[1] Should modern poetry be modeled on ancient poetry? What, if any, were poetry’s rules? Which meter and rhyme scheme should poetry use? Early Romantics had bestowed poetry with a yet higher significance. Friedrich Schlegel spoke of a “*Poesie der Poesie*” that shared an essential nature with both philosophy and criticism.[2] In a pivotal fragment, he captured the early Romantics' belief that art, like truth, could ultimately not be articulated by asserting that "[r]omantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry. . . . that is its actual nature, that it is eternally only in process, can never be completed." Poetry, he then claimed, is an activity that cannot be "exhausted by a theory."[3]

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[1] For an overview including Schelling, Humboldt, the Schlegels, and Schiller on this topic, see Matuschek (2013). The other German term associated with poetry, *Dichtung*, according to Ewton, concerns more “poetic fictions” in the sense of *Erdichtung*, or fabrication: Ewton (1972), 29.

Predictably, Hegel is uninterested in the mystical undertones of Schlegel's position and resistant to the suggestion that poetry cannot be defined. In introducing poetry in the 1826 lectures, Hegel recounts that A. W. Schlegel had declined to give a definition altogether, presumably finding the task too daunting (K26, 375).[4] This is hardly a fair characterization of Schlegel's historical, genre-based approach to art, but Hegel clearly feels vindicated. Fortunately, he says, "at this point in our discussion we can evade this difficulty" since such failure comes from attempting to define poetry through examples rather than through its place in a system (*Ä:III*, 237–238/971). By contrast, Hegel plans to allow poetry's definition to emerge from its dialectical position as the last of the individual arts.

Those same systematic commitments lead Hegel to declare that poetry is "the most complete" art (K26, 374).[5] Elucidating this claim is a central objective of the present chapter. But while tracing its transcendence of other arts, it will be helpful to keep in mind ways that poetry, too, ends. Poetry's development includes two of the kinds of endings that, I have argued, occur in Hegel's philosophy of art: a prosaic end and a final conceptual end. The individual arts have traversed a dialectical progression from architecture, which on Hegel's description is barely an art because of its "non-spiritual" material, to poetry, which Hegel claims risks no longer being an art because its material is too spiritual. The individual arts collectively reach a conceptual end in cases in which poetry, the last of the individual arts, transitions not into another kind of art but into philosophy. Poetry's conceptual end, then, brings Hegel's entire "System of the Individual Arts" to a close.

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[2] For discussion, see Rush (2016), 73.

[3] Schlegel (1958–), 2:182–183. What the early Romantics meant by poetry is a vast subject that I cannot do justice to here. See Beiser (2003), 7–22; Ewton (1972), 40; and Rush (2016), 58–65.

[4] Hegel seems to be less confident in his ability to characterize poetry in his earlier lectures: see A20, 231; H23, 253. On A. W. Schlegel's more historical—as opposed to systematic—approach as outlined in his 1798 Jena lectures on art, see Ewton (1972), 85–87. The cited edition is Schlegel (1911).

[5] Compare H28, 132. In claiming poetry's superiority, as Rutter points out, Hegel follows Kant, A. W. Schlegel, and Schelling, each of whom, it should be said, had his own reasons for his hierarchical choices. See Rutter (2010), 172.

The prosaic endings that characterize poetry illustrate again how any attempt at art can miscarry by lapsing into categories that resemble artworks but fail in fact to be art. Symbolic art, we remember, risks developing into the sublime or the fantastical; sculpture can cease to be beautiful and become merely agreeable or pleasant; comedy can veer into the domestic and, as we will see, the cruel. In those instances, Hegel uses the word "prosaic" to signal that the work in question fails to express the unity of unity and division—fails to be "poetic" in the more general sense—and so is no longer sensuously embodying truth. But just as this last chapter in Part III treats poetry in the narrower sense, it also considers prose in its narrower sense: as language that uses words as means to the end of communication without aspiring to be art. As will become clear, the poetry/prose distinction even in its narrower sense tracks Hegel's more general use of the terms. While prose can only forge external relations among ideas, poetry uses words to generate an image of the unity of unity and division in ways familiar from Hegel's general characterization of art: by making the familiar strange, by both exposing and creating meaning, and by allowing form and content to evolve together organically and reciprocally. When it fails to do this, poetry risks disintegrating into the ordinary, the florid, the natural, and the rhetorical—all ways it can lapse into the prosaic and cease to be art altogether.

There has been relatively little written about Hegel's theory of poetry in general, especially compared with the proliferation of scholarship about one subgenre of poetry, namely tragedy. Even within this scholarship, very little concerns tragedy's status *as poetry* as opposed to its plotlines or ethical significance. Gary Shapiro provides one exception. He asks whether Hegel suggests that poetry has implicit meaning: whether it communicates a meaning that is "referred to, or symbolized rather than being actually present in the literary work."[6] My argument will be that focusing on this question risks also privileging art as an expression of worldviews as found predominantly in Part II. It risks neglecting the ways in which poetry's contribution to our sense of self, independent of content, allows us to experience Hegel's idealist claims about our role in the mutual formation of reality. This discussion will also lay the groundwork for my claims in the following chapter about art's final end.

1. Poetry and the Ideal

In introducing "The System of Individual Arts" in Chapter 6, I suggested that Hegel, through his discussion of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, describes art as an expression of idealism in a variety of ways. One way is by assessing the extent to which each art enables humans to understand their status as the self-conscious part of the mutually creating whole that is reality—in other words, by assessing to what extent each art *in itself* embodies the Idea. How does poetry accomplish this?

We can begin to answer this question by comparing poetry to the other two romantic arts, painting and music. Music and poetry both employ sound as their material; poetry also retains the "tempo, syllables, rhythm, and euphony" that characterized music (*Ä:III*, 228/963). But its evocation of images through speech makes poetry able to draw in the *external* world in a way music cannot. In doing so, it dialectically corrects music's focus on the interior. Art's aim is to show the Idea in sensible form, and although music can powerfully evoke the aspect of the Idea that is humans' inner life, this interiority must ultimately be balanced by an evocation of the external world. Poetry's material, then, will be richer than music just as painting was richer than sculpture (*Ä:III*, 227/963).

But the fact that poetry is "the art of speech" does not mean that sounded words are poetry's material (*Ä:III*, 224/960). Poetry's material instead "is the *inner* imagination [*innere Vorstellen*] and intuition [*Anschauen*] itself" (*Ä:III*, 229/964).[7] The radical nature of this development would be hard to exaggerate. Instead of using external materials like rock, marble, or pigment, or even externally generated sensations like sound, the poet uses images that constitute her interior life. This, Hegel thinks, has the effect of holding those images up for our reflection. It also enables us to recognize them as jointly produced human creations: as having a history, cultural nuances, and evolving social significance. Through poetry, in other words, humans can pause to consider their own concepts through the words they themselves jointly invent to signify those concepts.[8] They make their own words strange to themselves and so prompt deeper consideration and further creation. Poetry, as Hegel puts it, presents "to *spiritual* imagination and contemplation the spiritual meanings which it has shaped within its own soul" [*ihre im Innern gestalteten Bedeutung des Geistes*] (*Ä:II*, 261/626). Through this contemplation, humans' inner life is revealed to be infinitely rich, including "the all-encompassing realm of human ideas, deeds, actions, and fates, the bustle of life in this world, and the divine rule of the universe" (*Ä:III*, 239/972).

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[6] Shapiro (1975), 90.

In presenting our own concerns to us for our contemplation, poetry allows us to reflect fully on our own status as the self-conscious part of nature. "Stars, plants, and animals neither know nor experience what their law is," Hegel says:

> but man exists conformably to the law of his existence only when he knows what he is and what his surroundings are: he must know what the powers are which drive and direct him, and *it is such a*

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[7] The vocabulary here is again difficult. In this case, Knox translates *Vorstellen* as "imagination," which risks confusing it with both *Einbildungskraft* and *Phantasie* as discussed in Chapter 1. In what follows, he generally translates *Vorstellung*—which is the word Hegel uses throughout his discussion of poetry—as "image" rather than representation (which is how Wallace translates it in the *Encyclopedia*). This seems justified to me, but it should be kept in mind that Hegel is not here using other terms for image such as *Bild.* For examples of Hegel's circling around these terms, see also H23, 256; K26, 375; and Hm28, 126. For discussion, see Chapter 1, Shapiro, 1975, 94 and Pillow (2000), 163ff.

[8] See Sallis's description of this aspect of poetry at Sallis (2007), 97.

> *knowledge that poetry provides in its original and substantive form.* (*Ä:III*, 240/972–973, italics mine)

In fact, poetry filters every object through its human significance, giving the external world "worth only in relation to man's inner consciousness" (*Ä:III*, 239/972). A poem about an urn or a nightingale mines these objects for their value to humans, allowing us to witness our own concerns manifested in the world. Since both its form (language) and its content (ideas) are explicitly human creations, poetry shows humans' co-authorship with the world most explicitly. All of this contributes to poetry's elevated status. Poetry's "highest content" is "the Idea, the Ideal in general" (K26, 375). It is "the absolute and true art of the spirit and its expression as spirit, since everything that consciousness conceives and shapes spiritually within its own inner being speech alone can adopt, express, and bring before our imagination [*die Vorstellung*]" (*Ä:II*, 261/626).

In achieving this absolute expression of spirit, poetry synthesizes the arts that dialectically precede it. Like music, poetry portrays "the inner life as inner" in a way architecture, sculpture, and painting cannot. But poetry also "broadens out into an objective world which does not altogether lose the determinate character of sculpture and painting" (*Ä:III*, 224/960). This ability to synthesize inner and outer itself models the Idea and so also contributes to poetry's status as art's culmination. Poetry thus most completely allows us to reflect on our status as part of the Idea and so itself embodies the Idea. It gives humans a way of experiencing idealistic truth and so generates the pleasure we associate with aesthetic experience.

From a purely dialectical point of view, then, it makes sense that Hegel would call poetry the culminating individual art. But there are deeper syntheses at work as well. Poetry resembles music in that we perceive its medium—namely, words—successively. When, to take one of Hegel's Homeric examples, I read, "When in the dawn Aurora rises with rosy fingers," I must synthesize the succession of words into a unity in a way not unlike the synthesis of sounds into melody (H23, 256). The reciprocal relation between world and self is especially clear in this case: without a human to effect this synthesis, there would be no poetry; reading or hearing poetry, like listening to music, contributes to my sense of myself in time. But like *painting*, Hegel claims, poetry invites the mind to coalesce its components into *images*.[9] So groups of words "are transferred into the element of the inwardly harmonious spirit which can extinguish a succession, [and] pull together a varied series into *one* image" (*Ä:III*, 226/961). "When in the dawn Aurora rises with rosy fingers" is, in other words, synthesized in my mind into an *image* of a sunrise. Poetry is, of course, unlike painting in that this image exists only in the mind: it appears, Hegel says, "to the inner life, to *spiritual* vision" (*Ä:III*, 226/961). Through poetry, then, "the spirit becomes objective to itself on its own ground" (*Ä:III*, 229/964). I will consider what Hegel commits himself to by fundamentally affiliating poetry with internal images in what follows. But for now, his point is simply that more explicitly than any other art, poetry enables humans to understand their mutually formative relation with the world and to reflect on the unity that relationship implies.

Poetry shares with other arts these ways of articulating the Idea even as it surpasses them: it allows humans to reflect on their status as the part of the Idea that recognizes itself, and it gives humans a sense of their interior lives. But there are two additional ways that poetry uniquely embodies the Idea. The first is that poetry, Hegel says, is "more capable than any other art of completely unfolding the totality of an event, a successive series and the changes of the heart's movements, passions, ideas, and the *complete course of action*" (*Ä:III*, 224/960, italics mine). In this assertion, Hegel was not alone: Lessing, for instance, had also described action as poetry's proper subject, just as bodies were sculpture's proper subject.[10] But Hegel has a more systematic purpose in emphasizing this characteristic. Action, as I argued in Chapter 1, is for Hegel among the most significant of humans' unique capacities. When understood in Hegel's technical sense, namely as something undertaken by an agent who understands her motivations and owns their consequences, action is one of the ways humans become self-determining and free. If part of art's mandate is to help humans understand themselves, art that elucidates action will help fulfill that task. In addition, the success of most poems is in Hegel's scheme judged by how well they can depict the complexity of action. As we remember from Hegel's taxonomy of plots in Chapter 1, conflicts triggered by humans' actions rather than, for instance, caused by natural disasters will most successfully enable humans to reflect on their own place in the world. Such poetry allows humans to reflect on their actions by making them strange through poetic expression. As we will see in the next chapter, poetry's final genre, drama, will prompt this reflection most effectively.

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[9] For discussion, see Desmond (1986), 8–9.

[10] Lessing (1984); see Beiser (2009), 190.

The second additional way in which poetry uniquely represents the Idea is bound up with the fact that its basis in language makes poetry a compelling example of how humans are both individuals and products of their culture. Language is necessarily the language of a group, and poetry—as Hegel will argue in his discussion of epics—is thus especially closely tied to a nation as Hegel uses the term: poetry "cannot dispense with the specific national character from which it proceeds."[11] Italian, Spanish, and English poetry will consequently differ "in spirit, feeling, outlook, expression, etc." (*Ä:III*, 245–246/977). Poetry thus brings to our attention the fact that "mankind" does not exist as a universal but "is particularized in many ways" corresponding to particular cultures. But poetry, more than the other arts, is a global phenomenon: it "enjoys its periods of brilliance and success in all nations and at practically every period which is productive of art at all" (*Ä:III*, 245/977). Its content is also universal: all poetry "embraces the entire spirit of mankind" and has as its content "universal human nature and art" (*Ä:III*, 245/977, 246/978). In poetry, in other words, human nature is expressed as it is universally, but through the national particularities of a language. By articulating a universal human nature through the particularity of national languages, poetry models individuality as an interpenetration of particular and universal and so embodies the Idea also in this sense. It is not a physical interpenetration of the two as we found in sculpture but takes place within the self-conscious individual. As we will see in what follows, that same interpenetration allows for collective identity formation not unlike the self-formation poetry also achieves on the individual level.

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[11] I discuss Hegel's meaning of words such as *Volk* and *Nation* in Hegel's philosophy in Moland (2011a), Chapter 3.

Poetry's particular characteristics make special demands on poets. Their task is both easier and more difficult than the task of artists generally. It is easier because they do not need to master another skill such as working with stone; they must only hone the linguistic skills shared almost universally by humans. But it is more difficult, because "the less poetry has to create an external embodiment [that can be seen or heard], the more it has to seek a substitute for this lack of perceptibility in the inner proper kernel of art, i.e. in the depth of imagination and genuinely artistic treatment" (*Ä:III*, 271/997). The poet cannot rely on any external materials, but must conjure up images through words. At the same time, poetry's freedom from the restrictions of external material means that the range of possible subjects expands dramatically, allowing poets richer material but also threatening to overwhelm them (*Ä:III*, 273/998). Poets must know the whole range of human emotions but also grasp the importance of cultural objects, religious imagery, historical narrative, and literary references. They must have a comprehensive and nuanced sense of language and know the norms of versification that define their craft. Given this wide range of knowledge implied in the poet's skill, Hegel says that poets should live lives free of "any practical or other preoccupation" and are likely to improve as they age (*Ä:III*, 274/999).

2. Poetic Origins, Prosaic Endings

For all of these reasons—its synthesis of other individual arts, its use of humans' ideas as its material, its enabling of self-consciousness, its depiction of action, and its contribution to the individuality achieved in national identity—poetry is the culmination of individual arts. But, as I suggested earlier, this elevated position does not eliminate the risk of prosaic endings, and it in fact brings poetry closer to the conceptual ending of the individual arts. To understand both these impending endings, we need to look at how Hegel describes poetry's origins in relation to the emergence of prose.

Hegel does not here take a position on the contentious question of language's origin.[12] He does, however, assert that poetry preceded "skillfully elaborated" prose (*Ä:III*, 240/973). Poetry originated the first time that "man undertook to express *himself.* . . . When once, in the midst of his practical activity and need, man proceeds to collect his thoughts and communicate himself to others, then he immediately produces a coined expression, a touch of poetry" (*Ä:III*, 241/974). Hegel's example is a distich commemorating the Battle of Thermopylae, which, in Knox's translation, reads, "Here four thousand from the Peloponnese fought against three myriads." Hegel parses this as follows:

> The report is left entirely simple: the dry information that four thousand Peloponnesians fought a battle here against three myriads. But the interest lies in the preparation of an inscription to relate this event for contemporaries and posterity, purely for the sake of relating it, and so the expression becomes poetic, i.e. it is meant to be a '*poein*' [a 'making'] which leaves the story in its simplicity but intentionally gives special form to its description. (*Ä:III*, 241/974)

What makes this an early example of poetry, then, is its anonymous author's intention to give form to an internal image and communicate it to posterity—to step back from the necessities of war and evoke a group of fallen soldiers for future audiences whose existence can only be imagined.

Hegel also describes such poetry as a dialectic of self-creation and self-discovery. Early poetry "does not at all take something already known independently in its universality and merely express it in imagery" (*Ä:III*, 240/973). The ancient poet did not first conceptualize himself in universal terms—as (say) a human, a Greek, and a soldier—and *then* synthesize his particularity with this universal in his poetry. His words instead came from an as yet undifferentiated unity with his surroundings. But once articulated, the sense of self results in a consciousness of those ideas and so consciousness of the self. Likely for this reason, early poetry "arouses astonishment because it reveals by language what hitherto had been concealed" (*Ä:III*, 285/1008). It appears to be "a miracle wrought by a gift and a force not yet made familiar but, to men's amazement, freely unfolding for the first time what lay deeply enclosed within their own hearts" (*Ä:III*, 285/1008–1009). At this point, when language is "still underdeveloped" and the nature of expressed truth is still revolutionary, poetic diction need not be complicated. By virtue of simply being given linguistic articulation, the images communicated astonish and move their audience.[13]

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[12] For a compelling account of this debate, see Bowie (2009), 48ff. See also Behler on Condillac, Hemsterhuis, and Schlegel: Behler (2002).

But this first poetry did not enable only *individual* self-consciousness. The astonishment and self-recognition it causes also give people a sense of themselves as members of a nation. Just as the individual lacked a sense of self before articulating an image for others, there was no nation before poetry: there was also "neither any fluency of ideas nor manifold and varied turns of expression" to bind people together culturally. But when the poet gathers thoughts to express himself and does so through a shared language, the images produced by his words prompt parallel self-consciousness in his audience. They experience the two phenomenological aspects poetry combines: the awareness of images within themselves and the sense of themselves through time. Hegel's description of this development is vivid: "at that time the poet was the first as it were to open the lips of a nation, to bring ideas into words, and *by this means* to help the nation *have ideas*" (*Ä:III*, 286/1009, italics mine). Just as articulating one's own mental images enables self-consciousness in the first place, a nation only becomes a nation once it has shared ideas and has identified them as its own. Poetry enables a dialectic of self-discovery and self-creation that results, in this case, in the national identities Hegel thinks are necessary to make a rich ethical life possible.[14]

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[13] Compare K26, 379–384 and Hm28, 126.

[14] This national feeling, as we saw in Chapter 7, is also expressed and solidified—in a literal sense—in architecture. I discuss poetry's role in the development of national identity in Moland (2011a), 126–141. As was apparent in Chapter 4, Hegel has no patience for those who claimed that national poems needed to be written retroactively to supply nations with a contemporary identity.

Early poetry enables these developments simply through the intentional use of language. Homer's diction, then, "may strike us nowadays as wholly ordinary" (*Ä:III*, 286/1009). But when "the range of ideas was widened, when the ways of connecting them multiplied . . . , and when linguistic expression developed to complete fluency," prosaic speech develops. Language's ability to communicate images proves useful, facilitating rapid progress in knowledge and technology. Eventually—in a process Hegel describes in sections on language in the *Philosophy of Spirit*—words cease to evoke the images they signify.[15] If I am told "the sun rises in the east," I need not produce an internal image of the sunrise to understand the sentence's meaning. Words become abstract, arbitrary signs. Divorced from its original images, language allows humans to become preoccupied with cause and effect and the relationship between means and ends—no longer using words to evoke the object, but to process its part in an argument or a pragmatic calculation.

Philosophers at least since the eighteenth century had described this transition from poetry to prose as a kind of expulsion from a linguistic Garden of Eden. Rousseau lamented an originally emotional language becoming dull; Condillac suggested a process of erosion whereby the original vividness of imagination is reduced as words began to refer to concepts instead of objects.[16] A. W. Schlegel characterized the understanding as destroying "the original unity of mind and senses," making language degenerate into signs unaccompanied by mental images.[17] The language that results is impoverished as compared to poetry's original creativity and force.

Hegel, too, sees the usefulness of prose as coming at a price, but this price is articulated in terms of his philosophical idealism. By reducing words to components of arguments or isolating something as a means or an end, the prosaic use of language begins, on Hegel's view, to obscure truth. The prosaic mind "has nothing to do with an inner connection, with the essence of things, with reasons, causes, aims, etc., but is content to take what is and happens as just this bare individual thing or event" (*Ä:III*, 243/975). Hegel, like Schlegel, associates this fixation on efficiency and argumentation with the understanding, which he describes here as "persist[ing] in separating the particular existent from the universal law and in merely relating them together" (*Ä:III*, 242/975). This "merely relating" is one of Hegel's standard criticisms of an incomplete conception of unity: a unity of seemingly unconnected parts rather than an organic, self-defining whole.[18] While "art in general loves to tarry in the particular," the understanding finds this tarrying "useless and wearisome," preferring to focus on "practical ends" (*Ä:III*, 251/981). The unity from which humans' self-articulation emerged recedes. Prose develops into its own linguistic genre, characterized by "literal accuracy, unmistakable definiteness, [and] clear intelligibility" (*Ä:III*, 280/1005).

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[15] See *EPG*, §459. For discussion, see Surber (2013).

[16] See Bowie (2009), 57–58.

[17] Ewton (1972), 25, summarizing from Schlegel (1911), 20ff. For a detailed discussion of the philosophy of language in this period, see Forster (2013).

3. Poetry after Prose

Poetry's ability to be a sensuous embodiment of the Idea is much complicated by the development of prose. Hegel echoes the call issued by A. W. Schlegel and others for poetry to reverse the degeneration of language by resisting the prosaic worldview: it must develop "a more deliberate energy in order to work its way out of the abstractions in the ordinary [way] of putting things" (*Ä:III*, 282/1006).[19] It "must go beyond formulating inner ideas and must articulate and polish them into a poetic work of art" (*Ä:III*, 247/979), attempting nothing less than a transformation of "the prosaic consciousness's ordinary mode of expression into a poetic one" (*Ä:III*, 245/977). In short, it must "diverge from that ordinary speech and be made something fresh, elevated, and *spiritual*" (*Ä:III*, 286–287/1009).

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[18] See Shapiro (1975), 99.

[19] For A. W. Schlegel on this topic, see Ewton (1972), 31. Schlegel spoke of this transition as a movement from *Naturpoesie* to *Kunstpoesie* (ibid., 36). Hegel did not, at least as an adult, join contemporaries such as Herder, Klopstock, and the Schlegels in hoping that a rebirth of mythology would facilitate this renewal: see ibid., 31.

Many of Hegel's criteria for how poetry can effect this transformation are familiar from his characterization of art generally. A poem must be formed into a whole; its parts must be interconnected and related to the whole. In addition to being united around a central theme, "every part, every feature [of a poem] must be interesting and living on its own account," and there must be an "inner bond" that holds these individual parts together, "apparently unintentionally" (H23, 255). It is, Hegel concludes, this "soul-laden unity of an organic whole which alone, as contrasted with the prosaic category of means and end, can produce genuine poetry" (*Ä:III*, 254/984).[20]

In addition to this internal, organic cohesion, poetry distinguishes itself from prose by making its content *figurative* (*bildlich*): by prompting humans to cease their prosaic calculations and again synthesize a group of words into an internal image (*Ä:III*, 276/1002). Hegel describes figurative language as reversing, in a way, the development of literacy: as children, on his account, we recognize each letter as symbolizing a certain sound and then, hearing the sound in our minds, recognize the word. Proficiency later allows us to comprehend words without consciously replicating the individual letters and the sounds they signify. Figurative language invites us to return again to the thing signified. To use Homer again as an example: when we simply hear words, for instance "the sun," we know what is being communicated without an image of the sun appearing in our minds. But the expression "When in the dawn Aurora rises with rosy fingers" prompts us to pause and produce an internal image of the sunset: it invites renewed consciousness of the thing signified by its sign. "For the proper objectivity of the inner life as inner," Hegel claims, "does not consist in the voices and words but in the fact that I am made aware of a thought, a feeling, etc., that I objectify them and so have them before me" (*Ä:III*, 144/898).

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[20] Hegel suggests here that some subject matters, especially modern ones, will be unable to achieve the appropriate unity. Poems about civic officials, for instance, are unlikely to be successful since their positions are involved "in infinitely varied external connections" or rely on something "violently abstracted from the rest of the individual's whole character" like duty. In neither case will we get good art since art is supposed to show a self-enclosed unity (but the official's role is too complicated) and be individualized (which simple duty isn't). The same limitations, unfortunately, apply to poems about professors (*Ä:III*, 249/980; H23, 273–274).

In stimulating us to imagine the object rather than simply comprehend it, Hegel claims, poetry returns to a more truthful view: "it adds to the understanding of the object a vision of it, or rather it repudiates bare abstract understanding and substitutes the *real specific character of the thing*" (*Ä:III*, 277/1002, italics mine). If, to take another of Hegel's examples, we are told that "Alexander conquered the Kingdom of Persia," it is a

> simple abstraction without any image and so our eyes are not led to see anything of the look *and reality* of Alexander the Great's achievement. The same is true of everything expressed in this way; we understand it, but it remains pale and grey . . . , vague and abstract. Consequently, in its imaginative way poetry assimilates the whole wealth of real appearance and can unite it into an original whole along with the *inner meaning and essence of what is portrayed*. (*Ä:III*, 278/1003, italics mine)

Poetry is, as it were, more true than prose because it tarries with the object, producing "spiritual vision," giving us a full, unified, organic view of its topic rather than simply articulating its role as a means to some end.[21]

In addition to being figurative, poetry can distinguish itself from prose by disrupting our everyday relationship to language. It can use words or expressions "either for elevating the thought or for comically debasing and exaggerating it" (*Ä:III*, 284/1008). It can cling "to archaic words" or be a "progressive innovator in language." It can vary sentence structure to bring out "the deeply felt, fragmentary and laconic expression which the depths of the heart can utter" (*Ä:III*, 284/1008). In its total effect, it can "make a great contribution to the expression of every situation, passion, and mode of feeling" through its "restless disjointedness and dismemberment or its tranquil flow, or its surge and storm" (*Ä:III*, 285/1008).

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[21] Compare H23, 254ff.

Poets can also experiment with versification. They can contrast the lengths of syllables and diphthongs; they can combine metrical feet into anapests and dactyls. Poets thus allow audiences to discover linguistic affinities and nuances in their own language, revealing the mutual formation and creation of spiritual meaning. Poetry must remain constantly attentive to making the familiar strange. If a rhythmic formation for instance is too often repeated, it loses our attention. Successful poetry thus often combines into a dizzying array of patterns with which Hegel, ever the consummate professor, was clearly familiar. “The classical iambic trimester acquires its beauty especially,” he for instance informs us, “from its not consisting of six similarly timed iambic feet but on the contrary precisely in allowing spondees at the start of the dipody and dactyls and anapests at the close” (*Ä:III*, 297/1018).[22]

Hegel’s account of versification is extensive, but it need not detain us further. Primarily it serves to illustrate the ways poetic expression can prompt humans to linger with the words themselves, reflecting on language as a mutually creative, evolving, self-constituting enterprise.[23] Contrasting the history of versification in the ancient and modern worlds allows Hegel to make the point that there is no externally existing normative structure that a language like German, for instance, should return to. Any such attempt will force content into form instead of allowing them to influence each other mutually as they should in order for the poem to be an organic whole.

But what does Hegel commit himself to by describing poetry as fundamentally evoking an image? Certainly some poetry with which Hegel was familiar was visually oriented in the sense that it prompted the reader (or listener) to form a mental image of a pearl or, to cite other famous examples, a lemon grove or a trout.[24] But to what extent is this true of all poetry? Can Hegel account for poems that evoke a mood instead of an image, or for abstract or surrealist poetry that engages in more conceptual play with language and does not necessarily or essentially correlate to internal images?

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[22] Compare A20, 257–258; H23, 258; K26, 385; and Hm28, 127–128. Compare also Schlegel on similar distinctions: Behler (2002), 139–140.

[23] Whether versification was necessary to classify something as poetry was another point of contention among Hegel’s contemporaries. See Beiser (2003): 9–10. See also Behler (2002), 126ff. for a fascinating discussion of Schiller, Karl Philipp Moritz, and the Schlegel brothers on the origin and significance of meter.

[24] I am thinking of Goethe’s *Kennst du das Land* and Christoph Friedrich Daniel’s *Die Forelle.*

One answer, which Hegel strangely does not prepare us for here, is his discussion of lyric poetry. Poetry of Hegel's time included poems that do not primarily evoke an image, for instance Franz von Schober's "*An die Musik*" or Goethe's "*Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*," both famously set to music by Schubert. In the next chapter, we will see that Hegel credits such poetry with evoking a feeling [*Empfindung*] and so approaching music's ability to help us feel our selves (*Ä:III*, 417/1112). Lyric poetry is more focused on mood than on the suggestion of inner images—a characterization that certainly applies to both Schober's and Goethe's poems. Since these moods are prompted by language, they are not as immediate as music, but the poems nevertheless do not primarily conjure images. Insofar as this is true, Hegel's own description of poetic genres means he is not as committed to defining poetry as based on images as his sections on poetry generally imply.

Hegel also suggests that poetry allows us to experience our language as communally constructed, evolving, and multi-layered. In addition, he praises poetry's ability to disrupt our habitual use of language through meter and rhyme. Insofar as he sees language as a system of signs in which both system and signs are products of humans' mutual determination with the world, he would, I think, be able to extend his theory of poetry beyond the internally visible. Some poems might simply disrupt our normal associations with words by focusing on their sounds; they might draw our attention to our participation in our symbolic systems by revealing layers of conceptual meaning not dependent on visualization. Such a focus on words *as words* would then correlate to instrumental music's focusing on sound or painting's focus on color: it would be a reflection on poetry's own foundation.

But the more that poetry focuses on words as opposed to images and the more conceptual it becomes, the closer it comes to philosophy and so the closer to art's end. How it can evade that end is a topic Hegel takes up at the conclusion of his comments on poetry.

4. The Ordinary, the Florid, the Natural, and the Rhetorical: The Ends of Poetry

Given the many demands being made of poetry, it is no wonder that attempts to achieve it are frequently unsuccessful. If in fact some part of this interrelated, organic unity of figurative language and poetic expression fails, the work "will be transposed from the element of free imagination into the sphere of prose" (*Ä:III*, 253/983). We have seen this type of failure throughout Hegel's description of art. But here Hegel mentions a few ways that poetry in particular can, as he says, "founder on the reef" of prose (*Ä:III*, 253/983).

The first is that while original poets needed only simple words to evoke the wonder of self-recognition in their audience, many poetical expressions "that were still fresh in earlier times have themselves become familiar and domiciled in prose" (*Ä:III*, 282/1006). In this case, the language becomes ordinary: the poem will fail to prompt humans' reflection on their language and ideas. The poet must overcome this familiarity through the means at poetry's disposal: through fresh figurative language, new turns of phrase, and archaic or innovative words.

But when the poet makes her efforts too obvious, the poem risks seeming artificial. The poet might feel "compelled to outbid prose, and, in order to be unfamiliar, slip all too quickly into . . . snatching at effects that have not yet been outworn" (*Ä:III*, 283/1007). As a result, poetry in the age of prose is "often driven willy-nilly, with its descriptive epithets, periphrases, etc., if not into exaggeration and floridity, still into artificiality, over-elegance, manufactured piquancy and preciosity" (*Ä:III*, 282–283/1006). This tension between prose and poetry, between overfamiliarity on the one hand and floridity on the other, is as Hegel says "a dispute that it takes supreme genius to assuage, as witness our contemporary poetry" (*Ä:III*, 282/1006).

A similar dichotomy emerges between rhetorical and natural language. In a criticism that resembles his dismissal of didactic poetry as a deficient art form, Hegel says that poetry that focuses too much on rhetorical form rather than content also risks no longer being art.[25]

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[25] Rutter discusses Hegel's complicated stipulations regarding intentionality in prose at Rutter (2010):142.

Some French poetry, for instance, uses so many rhetorical devices that the "language becomes decorative" and the attempted poem, somewhat ironically, "remains prosaic" (*Ä:III*, 288/1010). By this charge, Hegel suggests that the unity of unity and division that should be apparent in all poetry is unsuccessful since form and content originate separately and are only provisionally conjoined. Herder and Schiller, he thinks, sometimes use poetic expression "principally as an aid to expounding something prosaic" and so risk failing to generate real poetry. It is only "owing to the importance of the thoughts and the happiness of their expression" that they manage to avoid this fate (*Ä:III*, 288/1010).

Hegel also repeats his objections to the claim that poets should use natural, everyday language and that versification is "unnatural" because it "fetter[s] the imagination and make[s] it no longer possible for the poet to communicate his ideas precisely as they float before his inner consciousness" (*Ä:III*, 290/1012). Hegel instead thinks that through versification, the poet in fact "is also given what without this impetus would never have occurred to him, namely *new* ideas, fancies, and inventions" (*Ä:III*, 291/1013). In other words, Hegel envisions a mutually forming interplay between form and content, between the poet's ideas and poetry's forms of expression. If the poet is discovering ideas through the words themselves, the result will not be artificial or intentional in the sense Hegel wants to avoid, namely when the poet starts with content and forces it into verse. "Versified prose," he says, "does not give us any poetry, but only verse" (*Ä:III*, 289/1011). True poetry, by contrast, is possible when form and content reciprocally produce each other.[26]

This vision of poetry again supports Hegel's broader idealist claims. Throughout his philosophy, Hegel has argued against a strict differentiation between the given and the made, suggesting in every arena from chemistry to politics that reality is a mutually determining whole rather than a series of unrelated parts. In particular, the idea that the seemingly limiting strictures of versification might actually give the poet new ideas is reminiscent of Hegel's description of freedom within the ethical sphere. While we might think that ethical norms limit our ability to be free, they in fact enable freedom by allowing us to curb our desires in recognition of others. And when we realize that these norms—like the rules of versification—are not externally dictated, but our own creation, we can be free in following them by, in effect, giving ourselves the law. Hegel suggests that Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe all ultimately realized that the structure of verse was in fact a source of freedom. After embracing "natural" poetry early in their careers, they all turned again to versification, in Goethe's case recasting a few plays "entirely into the purer form" (*Ä:III*, 290/1012).[27]

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[26] Compare H23, 259 and K26, 385.

Further, the claim that poetry's form and content must mutually influence each other explains why historiography and oratory, despite being "kinds of prose which within their limits are best able to have their share of art," remain prose (*Ä:III*, 257/986). Since the historian is meant to recount actual happenings and analyze prosaic subjects such as laws and institutions, historical accounts "do not belong to the sphere of free art; indeed, even if we wanted to add to them an external poetic treatment of diction, versification, etc., no poetry would result (*Ä:III*, 258/987, italics mine). Despite oratory's poetic tools—unity, coherence, turns of phrase—the fact that the orator aims to convey a particular message disqualifies it as poetry. In short: "if poetry is not likewise to relapse into prose, it must avoid every aim which lies outside art and the pure enjoyment of art" (*Ä:III*, 268/995).

These, then, are all ways poetry can lapse into prose: by using language that is too ordinary or too florid, too rhetorical or too natural, or by first choosing a content and dressing it up in words. By contrast, Hegel says,

> every genuinely poetical work of art is an inherently infinite [i.e. self-bounded] organism: rich in matter and disclosing this matter in a correspondent appearance; a unity, yet not purposeful or in a form for which the particular is made abstract and subordinate, but where the same living independence is still preserved within what

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[27] This is not to say that these artists reverted to a set of rules such as those that dominated neoclassical art. Lessing, for instance, had been deeply critical of Gottsched for insisting that poets rigidly follow such rules. See Beiser (2009), 245ff.

> is individual; a whole, therefore, which closes with itself into a perfect circle without any apparent intention . . . creating freely from its own resources in order to give shape to the essence of things in an appearance which is genuinely that of the essence, and so to bring what exists externally into reconciled harmony with its inmost being. (*Ä:III*, 270/996)

Poetry itself, then, has come full dialectical circle. It emerged when poets first expressed themselves, verbally articulating an internal image for others that enabled self-discovery and self-creation. After facilitating this self-expression, language divorced itself from its images and, by conceptualizing the world through the divisions of means and ends or form and content, became prose. But by deliberately disrupting the familiar through figurative language and versification, poetry facilitates new moments of self-creation and self-discovery, producing again the experience of wonder that accompanied early poetry. Poetry after prose exhibits a conscious unity that includes division, but it overcomes the division by revealing an interconnected, organic unity. It allows ideas and language to form each other mutually, thus modeling idealist truth. This explains why even though poetry cannot achieve the perfectly beautiful interpenetration of classical sculpture and so is not the highest level *of art*, it is nevertheless the higher sensuous depiction of the Idea.

5. Poetry's Philosophical Ending

Even at its most successful, however, poetry risks no longer being art. This is because poetry "works neither for contemplation by the *senses*, as the visual arts do, nor for purely ideal *feeling*, as music does" (*Ä:II*, 261/626). It is instead "a withdrawal from the real world of sense-perception and a subordination of that world." What poetry wins "on the spiritual side," in other words, it "loses again on the sensuous." Poetry, Hegel says,

> goes so far in its negative treatment of its sensuous material that it reduces the opposite of heavy spatial matter—namely, sound—to a meaningless sign instead of making it, as architecture makes its material, into a meaningful symbol. But in this way poetry destroys the fusion of spiritual inwardness with external existence to an extent that begins to be incompatible with the original conception of art, with the result that poetry runs the risk of losing itself in a transition from the region of sense into that of the spirit. (*Ä:III*, 235/968)

As long as poetry retains a distinct meter or rhyme, it retains its “sensuous fragrance” (*Ä:III*, 289/1011). But it is perpetually at risk of no longer doing what art is meant to do: while sculpture, painting, and music make spiritual content “intelligible alike to sense and spirit,” poetry risks being unintelligible to sense.

The further poetry moves from sense, the more it begins to “dissolve and acquire in the eyes of philosophy its point of transition to religious pictorial thinking as such, as well as to the prose of scientific thought” (*Ä:III*, 234–235/968). This is again art’s almost paradoxical dilemma: the closer it gets to explicitly depicting adequate human self-understanding, the more it risks ceasing to be art altogether.[28] “In every way,” Hegel demands, “art ought to place us on ground different from that adopted in our everyday life, as well as in our religious ideas and actions, and in the speculations of philosophy” (*Ä:III*, 283/1007). The closer it gets to religion or philosophy, the less poetry is able to meet this demand.

What is lost in this transition is not the truth as Hegel understands it but art’s sensuous embodiment of that truth. In fact, Hegel compares poetry to “speculative thought”—one of the many ways that he characterizes his own *philosophical* commitment to articulating the true as the whole. Speculative thought is “akin to the poetic imagination,” but unlike poetry’s use of words to evoke images, speculative thought is truth conceived "in thoughts alone" (*Ä:III*, 243/976). It "produces works which, like poetical ones in this respect, have through their content itself perfect self-identity and articulated development." But speculative philosophy demonstrates its truth explicitly: for poetry, it "remains something inner and implicit" (*Ä:III*, 255/984). Instead of "expressly emphasizing" the unity of unity and division, poetry makes this unity "*manifest* again in the real world" (*Ä:III*, 249/976). Philosophy can articulate the truth, but since it does not manifest itself in reality, it is only thought and not art.

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[28] This is another way in which the poet is beset by problems not confronting other artists: her medium, words, is used for philosophical and religious content as well, and so her art risks becoming both. See also Shapiro’s argument against the claim that Hegel “takes philosophy to be capable of doing poetry’s job better than poetry does” (Shapiro 1975: 95).

This line of reasoning would seem to answer Shapiro's question—whether Hegel has a theory of implicit meaning as regards poetry—in the affirmative. Hegel himself, Shapiro points out, appears to say as much: at one point, he claims that the "thing in hand, the subject-matter" can simply be "turned from poetry into prose" (*Ä:III*, 229/964).[29] This would suggest that there simply is a meaning that poetry does not fully articulate but that can be articulated by philosophy. But the German for "from poetry into prose" in this passage is "*aus gebundener in ungebundene Rede*"—from bound to unbound speech. As we know, Hegel claims that many things that are not poetry in the sense of versified text can be poetic. This passage does not then, to my mind, suggest that a subject-matter can be turned from poetry to prose in the broader sense of those terms, but rather that if the content is poetic, it can be presented in bound or unbound—versified or unversified—text. Even if it were true that the same content could be expressed in poetry and prose in the broader sense, this analysis would neglect the aspect of poetry that allows us to experience our own interiority and our ability to mutually form and be formed by the world. Prose is unable to bring our experience of inner space to our attention in the way all the romantic arts do. Poetry is not, then, just a vehicle for implicit meaning but a way in which we develop a sense of self, both individually and collectively, and a sense of our mutual formation of the world.

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[29] I find no corresponding claim in the lecture series. At H23, 253, Hegel says it is possible to translate poetry from one language to another but not between prose and poetry. Shapiro's answer is that poetry must be symbolic insofar as it tries to present spiritual meaning in sensuous form, but that it is not *purely* symbolic since Hegel thinks the meaning in question is dialectical and overcomes the opposition of the symbolic. See Shapiro, 91ff.

Be that as it may, poetry's proximity to speculative philosophy, then, is why poetry is at once the highest, most complete form of art and also closest to its conceptual end. After poetry's barely sensuous articulation of inner content, no further *conceptual* development *of art* is possible. All possible combinations of sensuous embodiment (visual, audial, tactile) have, according to Hegel, been explored; the dialectic of inner and outer material has played out. At the furthest development of poetry, art ends by transitioning not into another individual art but into philosophy.

But this *conceptual* end does not imply that poetry, or art, will not continue. Poetry, like all art, should achieve a sensuous depiction of the true that is the whole. It should do so by making humans' co-creation of the world perceptible, giving humans a sensible representation of truth and so facilitating the pleasure of sensing truth. Insofar as contemporary poetry continues to do this by disrupting language, evoking inner images in new ways, and giving us a sense of ourselves in and through language, it can continue to be art. If it fails to evoke that recognition by being too ordinary, florid, natural, or rhetorical, or by shading into history, oratory, religion, or philosophy, it will no longer be art. But poetry that *can* model this sense of co-creation still makes the Idea present to us and so can keep fulfilling art's goal. In Hegel's theory of epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry, discussed in the next chapter, we find examples of such successes and so evidence of art's continued potential.

11

Embodied Reconciliation

Poetic Genres and the End of the Individual Arts

Because poetry is the "totality of art," Hegel says, it itself divides into genres corresponding to other arts (*Ä:III*, 321/1037). Epic poetry combines painting and sculpture. Lyric poetry resembles the musical. Drama is the synthesis of both.[1] These three genres both extend and conclude Hegel's discussion of poetry. By the end of this development, drama will achieve a final reconciliation that results in a richer unity of unity and division. This is not the only synthesis drama achieves; it also, as we will see, represents a new unity of spiritual and natural, subjectivity and objectivity, internal and external. Its principal instantiations, tragedy and comedy, bring these elements together in different ways that evolve also between the ancient and modern worlds. Drama can never achieve the complete interpenetration of spirit and nature found in sculpture. But it achieves a reconciliation—a unity that includes subjectivity's negativity—by showing how subjectivity, although it can never be fully represented, is physically embodied in human action. Hegel's theory of drama, as poetry's final genre, is in its broadest sense the culminating aesthetic instance of the reconciliation that underlies his system. Tragedy and comedy are art forms insofar as they exhibit that reconciliation.

Hegel's theory of poetic genres has been essentially neglected in the secondary literature, the notable exception again being the extensive scholarship on tragedy in general and *Antigone* in particular. Since Hegel's discussion of these genres concludes his lectures, this neglect has led to a wide range of conflicting claims about art's various culminations and ends. Several scholars have suggested that tragedy is, in Hegel's opinion, the highest art.[2] Rutter, by contrast, has recently described lyric poetry as "foremost among the post-romantic arts."[3] Comedy's position is especially contested. Comedy in one sense quite clearly constitutes the end of art in Hegel's system. It is the last form of drama; drama is the final development of poetry; poetry is the last "individual art" Hegel discusses in Part III, which is the concluding section of the entire lecture series. But it has remained unclear whether this position establishes it as the high point of the highest stage of art, or whether instead it signals an undignified end to art's otherwise sophisticated trajectory. The scholarship has remained divided. Kaminsky disparages comedy as a distracting escape for the lower classes; Shapiro, by contrast, claims that its "culminating" status in the progression of the *Aesthetics* makes it "supreme."[4] Comedy has also often been treated as synonymous with humor, which, given humor's history as discussed in Chapter 5, is both anachronistic and misplaced within Hegel's system. Only when both tragedy and comedy are understood as part of Hegel's theory of drama and drama itself is understood as a genre of poetry do their respective positions become clear. Only then, too, can we evaluate the significance of the three genres in relation to each other.

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[1] Architecture is apparently excluded because of its "purely external" medium. The triad of epic, lyric, and drama was used to distinguish kinds of poetry by several of Hegel's contemporaries, among them A. W. Schlegel and Schelling. Schelling, however, reversed the order of epic and lyric. See Rutter (2010), 178; Ewton (1972), 85; and Behler (2002), 136.

Each of poetry's genres was vigorously discussed by Hegel's contemporaries. Intellectuals from Lessing to A. W. Schlegel deliberated whether genres should be defined according to some systematic principle or by generalizing from examples; some argued against the attempt to draw systematic distinctions at all, with Herder for instance protesting that subjecting individual works to genre definitions would diminish the works themselves.[5] Ancient epics were celebrated as part of the revival of classical arts generally; in the wake of this attention, scholars debated whether the epic was essentially ancient or whether it should be revived as a foundation for modern nations. Schiller's disagreement with A. W. Schlegel over the definition of lyric poetry caused a permanent rupture in their relationship; a similar disagreement between the Schlegel brothers was a source of tension as well.[6] The evaluation of Shakespeare, as we saw in Chapter 4, had undergone a fundamental shift in the generation before Hegel's lectures, prompting a reevaluation of norms also for dramatic poetry. I cannot possibly do justice to each of these debates here, but their scope and force are without doubt the background to Hegel's assessment of how poetic genres, each in its own way, allow the Idea to appear in sensible form.

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[2] Roche (2002) lists several, including Koelb (1974), 72, Rosenstein (1970), 521, and Schultz (1984), 96.

[3] Rutter (2010), 172.

[4] See Kaminsky (1962), 166; Shapiro (1976), 32. Other arguments for comedy's preeminence include Paolucci (1978); Gasché (2000), 41; and Desmond (1989), 139. Roche by contrast argues that Hegel's placing comedy at the end of art's development is a "mistake that derives from his absolutization of subjectivity and subsequent neglect of intersubjectivity": Roche (1998), 40.

1. The Poetry of Collective Self-Consciousness: Epic

Poetry on Hegel's view, I argued in the previous chapter, facilitates self-consciousness by bringing images to our minds and so making us aware *of* our minds and of those images as our own. It contributes to our freedom by clarifying that the world is not given and that we mutually form the reality in which we live. Hegel has already described poetry's role in the creation of a people's collective self-consciousness, and epic poetry is the predominant medium in which this happens. Epic poetry articulates the earliest events that shape a people's character: in a work like Homer's *Odyssey*, the "childlike consciousness of a people is expressed for the first time in poetic form" (*Ä:III*, 332/1045). Epics are by nature sweeping—the *Odyssey* ranges widely both in time and in place—presenting "either the whole situation of a people or a concrete event within such a whole" (*Ä:III*, 338/1050). They enhance their mood with the kind of "external determinacies" Hegel specified in Part I, evoking gardens, tents, and weapons that unite and enliven the wide-ranging narrative. Epic poetry's essence also dictates the place of the author: he must be "absorbed in these old circumstances, ways of looking at things"; he must be so at one with the world he creates that he essentially disappears within it (*Ä:III*, 334/1047). As Hegel suggested in his general discussion of poetry, epic's form—its rhyme scheme, meter, and so on—must harmonize with its content: "the finest measure for the syllables in epic is the hexameter as it streams ahead uniformly, firmly, and yet also vividly" (*Ä:III*, 447/1136).

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[5] As Gjesdal puts it: "Greek tragedies neither could, nor should, be lumped together under a general label, let alone taken to exemplify a set of universal norms" (Gjesdal 2017, 133).

[6] Behler (2002), 133.

Within the epic worldview, as in the classical worldview generally, individual agency is limited. Here "circumstances and external accidents count just as much as the character's will." Hegel says that the individual "does not act freely for himself and out of his own resources; on the contrary, he stands in the midst of a whole nation" (*Ä:III*, 363/1070). This lack of agency means that fate figures prominently in many epics, often in the form of dreams and oracles. Inner feelings and intentions are not absent, but when they are expressed, they should be couched in appropriately epic terms. When Hector explains to his wife why he must return to battle, for instance, his reasoning is "deeply felt and touching," Hegel says, but his justification for leaving his family is focused on a "necessity which is as it were *not* his own intention and will" (*Ä:III*, 381/1084). The use of the epic mood to justify actions survives occasionally in modern drama as well: Hegel mentions for instance that Schiller's *Maid of Orleans* has several epic moments (*Ä:III*, 382/1085).

But the purest epics were developed by the Greeks; Homer in particular is the culmination of the "truly epic world of art" (*Ä:III*, 400/1098). This assessment resonates with the individuality and harmony that characterized Hegel's description of the ancient Greek world both in his discussion of classical art and the individuality of sculpture. In Homer, we find "a world hovering beautifully between the universal foundations of life . . . and the individual personal character; between spirit and nature in their beautiful equipoise; between intended action and external outcome; between the national ground of undertakings and the intentions and deeds of individuals" (*Ä:III*, 401/1099).[7] Seen as an evocation of classical harmony, the *Odyssey* is reminiscent of the sculptures of classical art's pinnacle. The divine appears in human form, showing perfect interpenetration of spirit and nature. When reading the Greeks' account of the gods and their exploits, "we are bound to be satisfied by the utter naïveté of an art which smiles cheerfully at their humanly shaped divine figures" (*Ä:III*, 401/1099).

The decline from this high point began soon thereafter, however, as Homer's successors "split up the entirety of the national outlook into its particular spheres" and "clung to the completeness of the occurrences from the beginning to the end of the event, or to the unity of a person" (*Ä:III*, 401/1099). As a result, epics either lapsed into histories or became bucolic, artificial, and didactic. Hegel agrees with Friedrich Schlegel that the golden age of epic poetry fully ends, predictably, in the prosaic Roman outlook (*Ä:III*, 402/1100).[8] In contrast to Homer's disappearance into his material, Virgil is ever-present: "every hexameter reminds us that the poet's way of looking at things is entirely different from the world he intends to present to us"; consequently, "the gods above all lack the freshness of individual life" (*Ä:III*, 367/1073).

From this point, epic poetry's successes are uneven. Hegel praises the twelfth-century Spanish *Cantar del Mio Cid*, which he likely knew from Herder's 1805 translation, crediting its depiction of medieval battles as being "so epic, so plastic, that the thing itself alone is brought before us in its pure and lofty content" (*Ä:III*, 403/1102). The original *Nibelungenlied*, by contrast, is more tragic and dramatic than epic; it both lacks true individuals and indulges in "harsh, wild, and gruesome" events (*Ä:III*, 406/1103). Dante's *Divine Comedy* provides a difficult case: on the one hand, it has "no individual rounded action proceeding on the broad basis of the whole" and so would not seem to qualify as an epic. On the other hand, its evocation of a system of divine judgment provides a kind of objectivity against which "everything individual and particular in human interests and aims vanishes" (*Ä:III*, 406/1103). Finally, there is chivalric poetry which, Hegel reminds us, he has already analyzed in his discussion of romantic art. Tales of adventurous knights are not sufficiently attached to national interests to count as epics. Their fundamental subjectivity means that they read more like ballads or novels that are linked to epics. Such works are more likely to become "saga-cycles" recounting the fantastical conquests of the Paladins of Charlemagne or the knights of King Arthur's Round Table.

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[7] On nations and epics, compare A20, 247ff.; H23, 272ff.; K26, 397; and Hm28, 132.

[8] Behler (2002), 134. Behler refers to Schlegel's 1798 *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer* (Schlegel 1958–, 1: 395–568).

Of modern attempts to revive or invent epics, Hegel is almost universally dismissive. Klopstock simply tries too hard, using a "forced rhetorical sublimity of expression" to create an epic effect. Hegel is also impatient with those trying to rehabilitate the *Nibelungenlied*, complaining that its tone is reminiscent of "fairground entertainers" [*gegen den bänkelsängerischen Ton hingeht*] (*Ä:III*, 345/1055) and condemning the "trivial and shallow notion" that the modern world can be reinvigorated through something "dead and gone" (*Ä:III*, 347/1057).

As poetry develops, the lyric and dramatic begin to predominate, forcing epic, ironically, into the domestic sphere. The modern world's prosaic organization means that "epic poetry has fled from great national events into the restrictedness of private domestic situations in the countryside or a small town," producing the counterintuitive result that epics have become idyllic (*Ä:III*, 414/1109). Especially in Germany, this fusion tends to produce "sweet and wishy-washy sentimentality" (*Ä:III*, 414/1109). Hegel agrees with A. W. Schlegel that Goethe again manages to achieve an acceptable compromise in *Hermann and Dorothea* (*Ä:III*, 414/1110): he "has been able to find and present out of our modern world today characteristics, descriptions, situations, and complications which in their own sphere bring alive again what is undyingly attractive in the primitive human circumstances" (*Ä:III*, 415/1110).[9] In general, however, the age of epic is over, and attempts to revive it will only result in sentimentality or false nationalism.

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[9] On Schlegel, see Ewton (1972), 95. The reference is to "Über epische und dramatische Dichtung von Goethe und Schiller" (Schlegel 1846–7, XI, 183–221).

2. The Poetry of the Self: Lyric

Since the epic poet devotes himself to describing external events, Hegel has claimed, he himself disappears from view, his own inner life invisible. Precisely "on account of this exclusion," Hegel claims, the opposite of epic developed, namely lyrical poetry. Instead of vanishing into the world, the lyric poet absorbs it into himself, stamping "the entire world of objects and circumstances . . . with his own inner consciousness" (*Ä:III*, 416/1111). "Out of the objectivity of the subject-matter [of epic]," Hegel says, "the spirit descends into itself, looks into its own consciousness, and satisfies the need to display, not the external reality of the matter, but its presence and actuality" (*Ä:III*, 416/1111). Lyric fulfills the need for "self-expression *and for the apprehension of the mind in its own self-expression*" (*Ä:III*, 418/1113, italics mine). Like music, its vocation is to "liberate the spirit not *from* but *in* feeling [*Empfindung*]" (*Ä:III*, 417/1112). Hegel thus agrees with several of his contemporaries that lyric approaches music most closely: it "lacks an independence and objectivity of its own and is especially of a subjective kind, rooted solely in the poet himself" (*Ä:III*, 449//1137).[10] Again we might think of Goethe's evocation of longing or Schober's hymn to music as quintessential examples of this kind of subjective mood expressed in lyric poetry.

While the epic concerns national events, the lyric is more limited in scope. Lyric combines the "universal as such, i.e. the height and depth of human faith, ideas, and knowledge" with the particularity of a "single situation, feeling, idea, etc." (*Ä:III*, 420/1114). It is united by mood rather than by form, meaning that epigrams, romances, and ballads can all be varieties of lyric. Because it is less dependent on the status of the world around it, lyric poetry is not limited to the early stage of a nation's history. It is possible whenever "the individual person [has] become self-reflective in contrast to the external world" (*Ä:III*, 431/1123). But it is "especially opportune in modern times when every individual claims the right of having his own personal point of view and mode of feeling" (*Ä:III*, 431/1124).

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[10] See Behler on this topic, especially as regards A. W. Schlegel in *Briefen über Poesie, Silbenmaß und Sprache* (Schlegel 1846–7, 7:98) and Friedrich Schlegel in his *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer* (Schlegel 1958–, 1:124): Behler (2002), 127ff. and 137ff.

Hegel quickly issues some familiar warnings. Although lyric poetry requires the expression of subjectivity, the poet must avoid indulging in "perverse notions and a bizarre originality of feeling" (*Ä:III*, 431/1123). The lyric must not be a "bare expression of an individual's inner life" but rather "a *poetic* mind's *artistic* expression, an expression different from an ordinary or casual one" (*Ä:III*, 431/1123, italics in original). While epic poetry allows nations to develop self-consciousness, successful lyric poets can make the poets themselves and their audiences aware of their own minds. This is "precisely because the mere self-concentration of the heart increasingly discloses itself in manifold feelings and more comprehensive meditations, and the individual *becomes increasingly aware of his poetic inner life* within a world already more prosaically stamped" (*Ä:III*, 431/1123, italics mine). This awareness of inner life means that lyric poetry is more self-consciously artistic, for instance, than folk poetry, which more closely resembles epic in its lack of self-consciousness. But to remain poetic, lyrical poetry must also not err too much on the side of this self-consciousness and become philosophical—a condition that generally "does violence to both art and thought" except in the works of an exceptional poet-philosopher like Schiller, who manages to allow for "free play" even within his philosophical musings (*Ä:III*, 437/1128).

Since it is determined by the individual poet's experience, lyric poetry's particular characteristics are harder to specify. But lyric poems should, for instance, avoid presenting an objective totality; the poet's leaps from one topic to the next need only be "alive in the poet's subjective memory" (*Ä:III*, 443/1133). In contrast to epic poetry's hexameters, in lyric we "require at once the greatest variety of different meters and their more many-sided inner structure" (*Ä:III*, 447/1136). Lyric poetry should also draw our attention to the "pure sound of words and syllables" by using alliteration, rhyme, and assonance. As Hegel argued in his description of poetry generally, humans' attention to their language allows them to experience it as their own creation and deepen their appreciation for its meaning, a process Hegel here describes as a "spiritualization of the language through the inner meaning of words" (*Ä:III*, 446/1136).

What, then, is the status of lyric poetry in Hegel's scheme? Rutter, to repeat, claims that it "is foremost among the post-romantic arts."[11] Apparently for this reason, Rutter, in his book-length treatment of Hegel on the modern arts, neglects dramatic poetry almost entirely. This, I think, is a mistake. Lyric poetry may well be the quintessential *poetic genre* in post-romantic art since it consists entirely of giving inner imagination in its purest form—and so subjectivity—the most sensuous expression possible. It is, then, closest to an expression of pure subjectivity in words. As Hegel says, the lyric is the closest form of poetry to music, and music, as we know, is subjectivity's feeling of itself. Like *sfumato* in painting or instrumental music, lyric poetry achieves its own genre's purest form: it is, simply and purely, the evocation of the inner life in words. But art is meant to be sensuous, and lyric poetry in its most subjective form is barely sensuous. It thus comes closest of the poetic genres to ceasing to be art at all. Drama, by contrast, re-enters the external world and, in doing so, achieves a higher synthesis that more closely achieves art's mission.

3. Embodied Action: Drama

If German-speaking readers of Hegel's generation had reason to celebrate the lyrical tradition that had so forcefully emerged with Goethe and Schiller, they had even more reason to celebrate the emergence of German drama. In the eighteenth century, Gottsched's efforts to reform German theater from entertainment to moral enlightenment had begun to have lasting effect.[12] Lessing's success with *Emilia Galotti, Minna von Barnhelm*, and *Nathan the Wise* heralded a range of dramatic subjects and styles that resisted the neoclassical, French model. Schiller had achieved international acclaim for *The Robbers* and sustained his reputation with immensely popular plays such as *Wallenstein* and *Don Carlos*. His collaboration with Goethe, whose dramas were also hailed as works of genius, revolutionized the Weimar theater and set a new standard for dramatic excellence in German-speaking states.

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[11] Rutter (2010), 172. Hegel's interest in lyric poetry seems to have increased in his later lectures: compare A20, 253–254; H23, 275–276; K26, 421–427; and Hm28, 133–135.

[12] Beiser (2009), Chapter 3.

Appropriately, then, Hegel's analysis of dramatic poetry begins dramatically: "Because drama has been developed into the most perfect totality of content and form," he declares, "it must be regarded as the highest stage of poetry and of art generally" (*Ä:III*, 474/1158).[13] How does it achieve this pinnacle? First, like epic and lyric poetry, drama uses speech, which, unlike other materials such as "stone, wood, colour, and notes" is "alone the element worthy of the expression of spirit." But drama privileges neither the objectivity of epic nor the subjectivity of lyric: it synthesizes the two (*Ä:III*, 474/1158). More significantly, in combining epic poetry's sweeping histories and lyrical poetry's self-reflection, drama brings our attention to that most human of phenomena: action. Hegel has already praised poetry's ability to depict action, but drama is the poetic genre that achieves this portrayal most explicitly. "What drama in general needs to be," Hegel claims, "is the presentation, to our minds and imagination, of actual human actions and affairs and therefore of persons *expressing their action in words*" (*Ä:III*, 475/1159, italics mine).

Drama will, then, accomplish a new reconciliation of spirit and nature by showing human action as the embodiment of spirit. It brings components of action to our attention much the same way as architecture enables us to contemplate space or music allows us to experience time. In a sense, it is the re-emergence of subjectivity after its withdrawal into the interiority of painting and music and so the subject's re-unification with the world. Drama also achieves a further reconciliation by bringing together architecture, sculpture, painting, and music. Whereas sculpture allowed us to see the perfect interpenetration of spirit and nature in the peaceful images of gods in human form, drama allows us to see human subjectivity, initially defined in opposition to the external world, physically embodied in action. It is, then, art's ultimate reconciling of unity and division.

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[13] On a similar claim by Lessing, see ibid., 268–269. Other seminal texts on this topic were A. W. Schlegel's 1808 *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (Schlegel 1846–7, vols. V–VI) and Friedrich Schlegel's 1812 *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* (Schlegel 1958–, vol. VI). It is worth repeating here that Hegel does not include novels in his analysis of poetry, apparently finding them too prosaic. See the discussion of novels in Chapter 4.

Hegel here reiterates some of his stipulations about art's depiction of action familiar from Chapter 1, for instance the general states, situations, characters, and collisions that best facilitate our reflection on the components of action. But here in his more particular discussion of dramatic poetry, Hegel specifically delineates the features "which in their harmony constitute the essence of every true action": first, what "is in *substance* good and great, the Divine actualized in the world" and, secondly, "the *subject*, the individual himself in his unfettered self-determination and freedom" (*Ä:III*, 520/1194).[14] In dramatic plots, these two features first create a conflict between two characters and then "in turn necessitate a resolution of the conflict"—in other words, they produce the drama's denouement (*Ä:III*, 476/1159). A drama, in short, implies a conflict between substance and subject that is resolved: at the conclusion, we see "the self-grounded final result of this whole human machinery in will and accomplishment, we see it in its criss-cross [*durchkreuzenden*] movement and yet in its final peaceful resolution" (*Ä:III*, 476/1159). The kind of clash and the kind of resolution determine which of dramatic poetry's subgenres—tragedy, comedy, or "drama in the narrower sense of the word" [*Schauspiel im engeren Sinne des Worts*]—the drama represents (*Ä:III*, 521/1194).

Drama's ability to depict action is already proof of its synthesis of epic and lyric poetry. Like epic poetry, drama depicts happenings. But drama cannot be satisfied with "letting the agent describe deeds that have been done without his participating in them"; instead, it must "display situations, and the mood they arouse, as determined by the character of an individual who resolves on particular ends and makes these what he wills in practice" (*Ä:III*, 478/1161). The lyrical, introspective element, in short, enables dramatic protagonists to reflect and so to become responsible for their actions. In focusing on a character's aims, then, drama allows us to witness how actions emerge: how "a specific attitude of mind passes over into an impulse, next into its willed actualization, and then into an action" (*Ä:III*, 478/1161). "In this way alone," Hegel continues, "does the action appear as an *action*, as the actual execution of inner intentions and aims. The individual identifies himself with their realization and in it finds his own will and his own satisfaction, and now with his whole being must take responsibility for what the issue is in the external world" (*Ä:III*, 478/1161). Drama thus facilitates reflection on one of Hegel's most explicit idealist themes, namely humans' understanding of their self-determining capacities. But drama also allows us to witness both outcomes that are not part of the agent's intention *and* the fact that we sometimes recognize our own intentions only through our actions. Dramatic action thus portrays the "complications and collisions which, against the will and intention of the agents, lead to an outcome in which the real inner essence of human aims, characters, and conflicts is revealed" (*Ä:III*, 477/1160).[15]

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[14] On the centrality of action, compare A20, 257–259; Hm23, 276–278; K26, 429; and Hm28, 136.

In order to set up these conflicts in a convincing way, dramatic poets must "have a full insight into the inner and universal element lying at the root of the aims, struggles, and fates of human beings" (*Ä:III*, 480/1163). They should know what kinds of complications arise from "subjective passion and individuality of character, or from human schemes and decisions, or from concrete external affairs and circumstances." They must be able to see the internal logic to actions that might otherwise seem contingent (*Ä:III*, 481/1163). And they must be able to imagine how these conflicts, however sharp, end in a resolution that exhibits the unity of unity and division, ultimately confirming the true that is the whole.

Before turning to considering the kinds of conflicts and resolutions that define dramatic subgenres, Hegel considers other characteristics that define drama in general. Like all poetry, drama needs to be fashioned into a whole that consists of interrelated parts. In the case of drama, this whole needs to be condensed more precisely into a unity of place, time, and action. Its development must be "strictly a steady movement forward to the final catastrophe" with no distracting, unrelated scenes (*Ä:III*, 488/1168). In its language, and specifically in its monologues and dialogues, drama again synthesizes epic and lyric poetry in a way that heightens the conflict and propels it toward its necessary resolution. Drama's language often has an epic element since the characters' speech generally relates to "the substance of affairs, aims, and characters" relevant to the plot (*Ä:III*, 491/1170). But monologues and dialogues convey the lyrical aspect, meaning that the dramatic character displays his "personal and inner life's sense of itself," albeit without lapsing into "a mere preoccupation with roving feelings" (*Ä:III*, 490/1170).

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[15] Speight argues that this phenomenon of an agent's learning about intentions through actions is evidence of Hegel's theory of "retrospectivity" as regards action: see Speight (2001).

For reasons by now familiar, Hegel objects to the use of natural language, which he again complains lapses "into dryness and prose"—here meant again in the sense of failing to be poetic rather than being unversified text—making it impossible for characters to appear "as men possessed of *substantial* significance" and so preventing the development of compelling conflict (*Ä:III*, 491/1171). Genuinely poetic language, by contrast, "will consist in raising the character and individuality of immediate reality into the purifying element of universality and in making these two sides harmonize with one another. In that event we feel, in the matter of diction, that without leaving the ground of actuality and its real traits we are nevertheless in another sphere, i.e. in the ideal realm of art" (*Ä:III*, 492/1172). Choosing the right balance of hexameter and pentameter will help achieve this ideal in both monologues and dialogues. But "the completely dramatic form is the *dialogue*" since "in it alone can the individual agents express face to face their character and aim" (*Ä:III*, 484/1164). Dialogue allows characters to articulate the subjective considerations through which they filter substantial issues; it allows them to pinpoint the sources of conflict in a way that lifts it out of the everyday. Throughout, the drama must remain poetic in Hegel's sense; its plot, characters, and settings must be presented "by poetry as poetry" (*Ä:III*, 490/1170).

Drama's synthesis of epic and lyrical poetry means that drama concerns action not only theoretically but literally: drama's action, Hegel says, "moves outwards, into external reality, and therefore its portrayal requires the whole man in his body" (*Ä:III*, 504/1181). Drama's characters need to act, physically, before us. This in turn requires a “specific locality” in which a character moves—in order to act, in other words, the character needs a set. The set, in turn, requires props, and the characters need costumes. Drama also needs speech that is intoned in a way comprehensible to a large audience. It needs, in short, “the aid of almost all the other arts” (*Ä:III*, 504/1181): an architectural stage, sculptured characters, painted sets, and melodious speech. A drama’s staging is, then, not superfluous: if, as Hegel complains was increasingly the trend in his time, a drama is read rather than staged, the embodied action that is its essence is lost.[16]

Drama’s staging also means that playwrights depend on actors to bring their works into existence. Acting, too, has evolved significantly since drama’s genesis in the ancient world. In ancient Greece, Hegel has argued, actors resembled statues: masks prevented individual expressions, allowing the characters to represent only a universal pathos. In the modern world, by contrast, drama has liberated itself from both music and dancing. The masks have disappeared, leaving the actor to “bring a poetic work to life perceptibly by his declamation, gestures, and play of features” (*Ä:III*, 512/1187). This development changes the relationship between playwright and actor. On the one hand, it seems that the “actor should be the instrument on which the author plays” (*Ä:III*, 513/1188). On the other hand, modern actors have “the play of feature, variety of gesture, and a wealth of shades in declamation” available to enhance the drama’s conflict (*Ä:III*, 513–514/1188). This opening for individual expression has the ironic consequence of eroding drama’s basis in poetry since “the poet leaves to the actor’s gestures a great deal which the Greeks would have put into words” (*Ä:III*, 514/1189). Schiller’s ten-hour-long trilogy *Wallenstein*, for instance, ends with a principal character simply crying out: his despair is “not expressed here in words but is left entirely for the actor to present in his mien and gestures” (*Ä:III*, 514/1189).

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[16] This is likely a criticism of A. W. Schlegel, who had argued that Hamlet, for instance, be considered a *Gedankenschauspiel*, a play of thoughts rather than of action. See Gjesdal (2018), 264. This part of drama’s definition further clarifies why Hegel is unenthusiastic about novels. It is true that novels allow us to imagine humans acting, but they do not show us *action*.

As a result, Hegel generously concludes, actors are no longer a "moral nor a social blot" (*Ä:III*, 515/1189). They are themselves artists, showing "intelligence, perseverance, industry, practice, and knowledge," and at times even genius (*Ä:III*, 515/1189). The significance of this moment in art's trajectory is striking: the embodied, acting human has now become himself an artist, able to give a text meaning by "penetrat[ing] profoundly into the spirit of the poet": by "enlarging many points, filling gaps, and finding transitions; in short in playing his part by bringing out the author's intentions and master-strokes into a living present" (*Ä:III*, 515/1189, translation modified).

Hegel also pauses to acknowledge that the individual arts supporting the drama—the acting, the music, the dance—can also be independently developed. The result, by his telling, is a variety of moderately successful art forms. French and Italian playwrights, for instance, have turned roles into types that serve only to showcase the actor's improvisational technique. In French *haute comédie* and Italian *commedia dell'arte*, "the author is little more than an accessory and a frame for the natural character, skill, and art of the actor" (*Ä:III*, 516/1190). In an especially backhanded compliment, Hegel says that "downright bad productions" of plays by Iffland and Kotzebue in his own time present a professional opportunity for talented actors: now that "droning and mumbling words, intelligible to nobody, is allowed to count as an excellent play," actors have the opportunity to shine through bad playwriting with impressive improvisation.

Opera, by contrast, develops when a drama's plot is overshadowed by its music (*Ä:III*, 517/1191). Unmoored from the conflict at drama's heart, opera descends into luxury and ostentation. The frivolousness of both sets and costumes is then matched by a content that is "devoid of any intelligible connection" and dissipates into the "miraculous, fantastic, and fabulous" (*Ä:III*, 518/1191). Dance, when it likewise no longer fills a need in drama and goes its own way, also lapses into the "miraculous and fabulous," transporting us "into a realm where we have left far behind us the logic of prose and the distress and pressure of everyday life" (*Ä:III*, 518/1192). Those who appreciate dance are only admiring the physical dexterity and technical mastery it demonstrates, Hegel says, not to mention the "suppleness of the legs" (*Ä:III*, 518/1192). Improvisational acting, opera, and dance, then, are ways drama ends by disintegrating into its constitutive parts which then follow their own path to mostly unsatisfactory conclusions.

These dismissive comments surely indicate the limitations of both Hegel's systematic approach and his classical orientation. It may be true that none of these derivative arts fit neatly into the scheme of externality, individuality, and subjectivity that Hegel takes to be fundamental. But dance can bring movement to our attention as another kind of embodied spirituality, or as a way of experiencing time physically. Improvisational acting showcases the interpersonal and reactive aspects of actions and so can lead us to think about agency. Others have famously thought of opera as the highest form of art—in Wagner's term, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—precisely because of its ability to incorporate all the elements of ancient drama but in a modern context. In none of these cases is Hegel's dismissal convincing, however much it supports his larger systematic claims.

Be that as it may, Hegel concludes that insofar as drama holds these parts together, it can successfully embody the tensions between subject and substance that issue in action and so comprise drama's essence. These two components also define dramatic poetry's two subgenres. If "what is kept dominant in the individuals and their actions and conflicts is a substantive basis"—that is, if the drama revolves around substantial issues—tragedy results. If instead the protagonists' "subjective caprice, folly, and perversity" prevail, the drama will be a comedy (*Ä:III*, 521/1194).[17] The balance of substance and subjectivity is also deeply affected by the modern development of the latter, meaning that Hegel's assessment of dramatic subgenres is divided into ancient and modern versions.[18]

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[17] The question of what should be classified as tragedy had a long history by Hegel's lifetime. See, for instance, Gjesdal's description of Lessing's objections to Voltaire's definition of tragedy and Herder's response (Gjesdal 2017, 133–134). See also Beiser on Lessing's role in establishing the possibility of bourgeois tragedy (Beiser 2009, 245). Gottsched had seen tragedy primarily as a tool for moral education in which suffering preceded the triumph of the good (ibid., 80ff.). On A. W. Schlegel's discussion of tragedy, especially the claim that it has no one necessary condition, see Ewton (1972), 92–94. Schlegel did not, Ewton observes, speak of romantic tragedy and comedy "but rather of romantic drama (*Schauspiel*)," which had its own unique characteristics (ibid., 105). Ewton's analysis is based on Schlegel's 1798 Jena lectures as well as his Berlin *Vorlesungen über schöne Literatur und Kunst*, given in 1801–3 (Schlegel 1911; Schlegel 1884). See also Behler on Friedrich Schlegel's skepticism, expressed in his *Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer*, regarding whether isolating a common characteristic between ancient and modern tragedy was possible: Behler (2002), 134. On Schelling's placement of tragedy as the highest art, see George (2005), 141ff.

4. Tragedy as Substance, Comedy as Subject: Ancient Drama

A. Ancient Tragedy

The "true content of the tragic action," Hegel claims, will involve substantial concerns such as the family, religion, or the state. In drama's ancient Greek origins, most notably the plays of Sophocles, these concerns indeed predominate. Just as importantly, tragic characters identify with these concerns completely and are "prepared to answer for that identification" (*Ä:III*, 522/1195).[19] Here again Hegel draws a comparison between ancient dramatic protagonists and ancient Greek statues: in tragedy, the "mere accidents of the individual's purely personal life disappear, [and] the tragic heroes of dramatic art have risen to become, as it were, works of sculpture" (*Ä:III*, 522/1195).[20] In other words, actors in early tragedies—for example in the dramas of Aeschylus—barely acted. They were effectively moving statues embodying conflicting divine laws, with particular expressions hidden by masks and constricting costume limiting gesture.[21] Sophocles's slightly later tragedies already include more subjectivity: Antigone, Hegel's favorite example, embodies the law of the family, but in her struggle with Creon representing the law of the *polis*, she articulates her own understanding of justice.[22] Antigone and Creon nevertheless illustrate a second major characteristic of tragedy that follows from the deep identification of characters with their roles: namely, the one-sidedness of their claims. The completeness with which each character identifies with one law over the other disrupts the substantial order and sets up the drama's conflict. The characters are, at least initially, unable to see themselves as part of the same ethical substance. Since both sides have divine justification, a clash is inevitable (*Ä:III*, 549/1217).[23]

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[18] Compare A20, 260ff.; H23, 279ff.; K26, 442ff.; and Hm28, 138ff.

[19] Parts of the following discussion originated in Moland (2016).

[20] See Gjesdal on other authors' comparisons of sculpture and acting: Gjesdal (2018), 252, 266.

[21] See Harris (1997), 633.

[22] Peters suggests that tragedy is where we see the classical concept of beauty disintegrate on its own terms since the "beautiful soul" cannot include subjectivity and so is inadequate. See Peters (2015), Chapter 5.

Essential to a play such as *Antigone* being art in general and drama in particular, however, is the fact that the drama ends with a reunification that corrects this one-sidedness. "What is superseded in the tragic denouement," Hegel claims,

> is only the *one-sided* particular which had not been able to adapt itself to this harmony, and now (and this is the tragic thing in its action), unable to renounce itself and its intention, finds itself condemned to total destruction, or, at the very least, [finds itself] forced to abandon, if it can, the accomplishment of its aim. (*Ä:III*, 524/1197)

Harmony in the form of *re*unification, in other words, is achieved when individuals are sacrificed or repudiate their original aims. Tragic plots thus model Hegel's description of unity going out of itself into division and ultimately returning to itself. In depicting conflict that is both inevitable and inevitably resolved in the characters' defeat, they also model the necessity at the heart of Hegel's dialectic. This necessary reunification in turn allows tragedy, despite its tension between human and divine, to be art in the sense that it represents the Idea sensuously by revealing the true that is the whole. In a clear echo of Schiller, Hegel suggests that the experience of this reunification was what allowed Greek audiences to leave the theater with cheerful hearts despite the death and destruction with which tragedy ends (*Ä:III*, 547/1215). Such cheering reunification will, according to Hegel, find one more explicit expression in the history of art: in the comedies of Aristophanes.

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[23] Hegel famously also makes *Antigone* a major focus of his analysis of Greek *Sittlichkeit* in the *Phenomenology* beginning at §470. Scholarship on these passages is legion; most focus on Antigone and Creon as representatives of tensions within ethical life. See Gellrich (1988); Houlgate (2007b); Roche (1998); Williams (1966); MacDonald (2008), Chapter 3; and Speight (2001), Chapter 2. Again, this focus is certainly legitimate, but too many discussions of Hegel's theory of tragedy neglect its status as a *drama*, which is my focus here.

B. Ancient Comedy

As opposed to tragedy's basis in the substantive, comedy emphasizes the subjective. In comedy, Hegel writes, "there comes before our contemplation, in the laughter in which the characters dissolve everything, including themselves, the victory of their own subjective personality which nevertheless persists self-assured" (*Ä:III*, 527/1199). This boisterous, self-dissolving subjectivity is best observed in the plays of Aristophanes generally and in *Clouds* in particular.

What, then, are Old Comedy's essential characteristics? As already established in Chapter 3, Hegel specifies that true comedy is possible when the characters' aims are self-defeating *and* they do not identify fully with those projects in the way that tragic characters do—when they are able to distance themselves from those aims and laugh, with the audience, at their failure.[24] Comic protagonists' imperturbability also makes them powerful and free: they "reveal themselves as having something higher in them because they are not seriously tied to the finite world with which they are engaged but are raised above it" (*Ä:III*, 553/1221). In comedy, "man as subject or person has made himself completely master of everything" (*Ä:III*, 527/1199); comic protagonists are in fact "all the more imperturbable the more incapable they obviously are of accomplishing their undertaking" (*Ä:III*, 554/1222). Hegel describes this imperturbability again as reminiscent of the Greek statues that perfectly embodied the interpenetration of human and divine: comedy's lighthearted destruction briefly restores "the smiling blessedness of the Olympian gods, their unimpaired equanimity which comes home in men and can put up with everything" (*Ä:III*, 554/1222). Like tragedy, then, comedy returns to the unity of the gods from which action originated. "It is to this absolute freedom of spirit which is utterly consoled in advance in every human undertaking, to this world of private serenity," Hegel says, "that Aristophanes conducts us" (*Ä:III*, 553/1221). *Clouds* accordingly ends with Strepsiades's negation of the substantial order and reconciliation again with the old order.

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[24] Compare A20, 270–271; H23, 287–288; K26, 457–458; and Hm20, 141.

It is this negated negation, Hegel concludes, that confirms Aristophanes's creations as "genuine art" (*Ä:III*, 530/1202). Hegel thus resists the tendency from Aristotle to A. W. Schlegel to classify comedy primarily as a lower art form characterized by its depiction of lower social classes or our own baser instincts.[25] Aristophanes's comedies, for all their raucousness, sensuously embody the Idea by portraying a unity which goes out of itself into division and then returns to itself in reunification. Because Strepsiades's aims were contradictory, they destroyed themselves, negating sophistry's attempted negation of ethical life. What is left after this negation is, then, substance: in the case of *Clouds*, the laws of Athens, safe again (however briefly) from Socrates's corrosive critique. But—again like the reconciliation at the end of tragedy—the substance that survives now includes division and reflection and so is a unification of unity and division rather than a static unity. As opposite as they are in every other way, ancient tragedy and Old Comedy yield similar results: subjectivity asserts itself in action; its aims are destroyed; it reunites with the whole from which it emerged, transforming that whole in the process.

But there is yet another layer to comedy—or at least to Hegel's admittedly over-determined analysis of *Clouds*—that I think explains its elevated position in Hegel's system. In more ways than one, comedy shows humans to be self-determining and free, not subject to divine law. *Clouds* credits Socrates with teaching that there are no gods: humans instead are the source of their own laws. The "credit" here is complicated: although Socrates is pilloried throughout *Clouds*, Hegel seems to think that the positive side of his message nevertheless comes through, perhaps despite Aristophanes's intent. So Hegel praises Aristophanes *both* for explicitly recognizing the danger of Socrates's teaching and for perhaps unintentionally crystallizing its truth. The message of *Clouds*, in H. S. Harris's words, is that humans should "recognize themselves as world-creators, and as the creators of the Gods." If this is true, Harris continues,

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[25] A. W. Schlegel, for instance, described comedy as "purposeless fun" portraying, as Ewton puts it, the "dominion of man by his own lower nature." He also comments on the realistic nature of New Comedy (Ewton 1972, 94). Both references are to Schlegel's 1808 lectures in Vienna (Schlegel 1846–7, V, 147, 105). Lessing, by contrast, argued that the "aim of comedy is to improve the morals of the spectator, to make vice hateful and virtue lovable" (Beiser 2009, 250).

> [c]omedy is the moment of perfect self-consciousness of what Art is. We have left the realm of the immediately natural self and entered that of *rational* self-certainty. Thinking is now recognized as "absolute might"; God does not need to be embodied in a statue, in an athlete, or in a tragic hero presented to us in an imitative mode, as a model for our imitation.[26]

In brief, comedy suggests that we no longer need representations of the divine: we *are* the divine. Art was, we remember, meant to express the Idea and so help humans overcome the provisional opposition between divine and human. Insofar as humans now see themselves as divine, this goal too has been achieved.

This self-determination can be seen, too, in the fact that comic characters do not one-sidedly identify with roles as do tragic characters. Comedy in fact explicitly shows its characters to be aware of their power over their roles, able as Speight puts it to "come out from behind a mask and, with a wink at the audience, play ironically with the dramatic illusion" both are engaged in.[27] Comic characters in a sense then play with the concept of drama itself, removing the traditional mask to allow subjectivity to show through. In the case of *Clouds*, Aristophanes himself famously appears on stage to cajole the audience into casting their votes in his favor, eliminating the dramatic distance otherwise typical of drama.

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[26] Harris (1997), 638. Harris's account is based on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but much of his analysis is relevant for determining comedy's role in the lectures on aesthetics as well.

[27] Speight (2001), 73. See also Shapiro (1976), 32. It seems, incidentally, that Hegel was wrong in thinking that ancient comic actors actually did not wear masks (Speight 2001, 74).

Ancient drama in any form cannot match the peaceful interpenetration of human and divine perfectly achieved in sculpture: in this sense, sculpture best fulfills art's mandate. Yet in another sense comedy transcends sculpture by incorporating back into a unity what sculpture cannot depict, namely the interiority that converts happenings into actions. Ancient tragedy and comedy retain their status as art by depicting the reunification that follows after action disrupts divine unity: in tragedy through the individuals destroying themselves; in comedy, through the characters' self-destructive aims. But comedy surpasses tragedy's ability to convey the Idea in sensuous form. Aristophanes, in Hegel's philosophical analysis, shows humans to be masters of their world instead of tragically succumbing to a necessity they recognize but not as their own. Unlike Antigone, in other words, Aristophanes's characters do not defer to immutable divine laws. They instead understand themselves as the creators of the gods and so as free and self-determining. Old Comedy then comes closer to conveying Hegel's conviction that humans are the part of the whole that recognizes and articulates its contribution to the whole's dynamic unity.[28]

But comedy after Aristophanes soon dissipates into inferior forms. Here Hegel first mentions satiric dramas that, as we saw in Chapter 4, fail to achieve unity at all. There is also an additional genre of dramatic poetry (which Hegel confusingly calls "drama, i.e. a play in the narrower sense of the word" [*Ä:III*, 521/1194]) that provides an easier but more facile reconciliation than Old Comedy. Falling into this category are tragicomedies that simply mix serious action with comic characters, and plays such as *Eumenides* and *Philoctetes*, whose resolutions are artificially accomplished by divine commands (*Ä:III*, 532/1204). No genuine tension between subject and substance is evoked, making reconciliation superfluous. The poetic, Hegel stipulated, signified art's attempts to embody the reunification of human and divine, subject and substance. Lacking even an aspiration to evoke this truth, drama begins to "laps[e] into prose" (*Ä:III*, 533/1204).

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[28] See also Schneider (1995), 86. Roche has attempted an improved taxonomy of genres which is, by his own description, not faithful to Hegel's intentions but helpfully illuminates what is at stake in classifying drama in the first place. See Roche (1998), 247ff.

5. The Triumph of Subjectivity: Modern Drama

A. Modern Tragedy

Despite the appearance of these weakened dramatic genres, Hegel claims that tragedy and comedy survive and evolve, in less perfect form, in the post-classical world. This was not an uncontroversial position. Herder, for instance, had argued that ancient and modern tragedy should not be held to the same standards and that Shakespeare, for example, was right to express his own world rather than trying to imitate Sophocles.[29] But Hegel indeed holds modern and ancient dramas to the same standards and finds modern versions wanting. In both cases, diagnosing their diminished status requires tracing the increasing prominence of subjectivity and its effects on art. Drama, as a genre of poetry, is also a romantic and so a "subjective" art, as opposed to architecture's externality and sculpture's individuality. But as opposed to painting, which showed subjectivity's retreat, and music, which consisted entirely of the subject's feeling of itself, drama is the art that should show the reconciliation of this subjectivity with objectivity. It can therefore be weakened by modern subjectivity's excesses. In the modern world, then, subjectivity erodes both tragedy and comedy, leading to another of art's major endings.

Modern tragedy is characterized by the intensification of subjectivity in a genre whose essence is the substantial: "even in modern tragedy," Hegel says, "the principle of subjectivity, free on its own account in comedy, becomes dominant" (*Ä:III*, 532/1203). Tragedy's principal topic is consequently now "provided by an individual's passion, which is satisfied in the pursuit of a purely subjective end"

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[29] See Gjesdal (2018), 258.

(*Ä:III*, 536/1206). Substantial concerns may still play a role, but only as the plot's background, not as the "ultimate object of [the character's] willing and acting" (*Ä:III*, 537/1207).

Subjectivity's incursion into tragedy explains several changes in the genre. First, the subject matter of ancient tragedies was limited to substantial issues such as the family, religion, and state. Since, by contrast, an individual's particular aims define modern tragedy, the whole spectrum of human activity is fair game. Modern dramatists consequently produce tragedies featuring political ambition, romantic love, sibling rivalry, and any number of other human situations. The shift toward subjectivity also explains the chronic indecision typical of protagonists such as Hamlet or Wallenstein. While Antigone and Creon knew immediately what their roles required of them, modern protagonists' ends have no divine justification. Instead of acting with conviction, then, they indulge in agonized "swithering" (*Ä:III*, 546/1214).[30] Worse: when these characters act and bring about their own destruction, the lack of divine justification means that their deaths resemble cold, criminal justice rather than the execution of divine law (*Ä:III*, 565/1230).[31] Hegel admires the stoicism of the tragic hero who accepts his fate, stating simply: " 'It is so.' " By remaining cheerful even in the face of death, "[m]an, the slave of destiny," shows that he "may lose his life, but not his freedom" (*Ä:III*, 208–209/158). This, remarkably, is the only reference Hegel makes to the tragic sublime as articulated by Schiller, whose several essays on tragedy had argued for its ability to show the pinnacle of human freedom and dignity. But if the cause of the tragic situation is human rather than divine, the tragic hero's acceptance of his death is more horrifying than noble, and Hegel seems to fear that audiences will be unable to be reconciled to the hero's fate.[32]

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[30] Hegel is sometimes credited with being the first to give this psychological interpretation of Hamlet, but Herder definitely precedes him: see ibid., especially 249, 260.

[31] I discuss this aspect of tragedy further at Moland (2011b), 12–16.

[32] Hegel's resistance to Schiller's depiction of tragedy goes back to an early review he wrote of Schiller's *Wallenstein*. See *Frühe Schriften*, 618–620. I argue that his sharp criticisms are based in his objection to Schiller's post-French Revolution philosophy of history in Moland (2011b).

These consequences impact Hegel's evaluation of whether tragedy achieves the unity and necessity characteristic of drama. As to unity: since the situations underlying modern tragedies are based in the subjective and not in the substantial, their denouements do not depict the Idea in the sense of the unity of the human and the divine. Since neither Wallenstein's nor Hamlet's aims, for example, correlate to divine law to begin with, their deaths at the tragedy's end cannot restore a disrupted divine unity. Art was also meant to reaffirm our unity with the ethical order and give us a sense of restored unity with the divine. Most modern tragedies are unable to do this.

The development of subjectivity also weakens the necessity that is characteristic of tragedy in particular and of art in general. Because modern tragedy depicts not the inevitable clash of fated powers but that of contingent human projects, modern tragedy does not share ancient tragedy's inevitability. Unlike Antigone and Creon, Hamlet and Wallenstein could have made different choices and presumably avoided their fates. Modern protagonists' lack of divine justification is again relevant here. While Antigone and Creon could cite eternal law as their justification, Hamlet and Wallenstein have no defense beyond their own conviction. Their fates are the result of a "purely horrible, external necessity" (*Ä:III*, 566/1231): necessity not generated by divine law but by the contingent situations human actions create.

As a result of tragedy's weakened unity and necessity, modern audiences can no longer leave the theater with cheerful hearts. We are denied the relief provided by the restoration of the ethical order and the sense that the characters' suffering was necessary. Subjectivity's cumulative effect on tragedy as a genre, in short, is to weaken it, and its weakness makes its culminating suffering unnecessary. If tragedy's suffering is indeed unnecessary, Hegel confesses that he would rather see a comedy. "And," he asks, "why not?" Faced with art's weakened unity and fading necessity, modern spectators' best course of action, it seems, is to laugh.

B. Modern Comedy

But since modern comedies also do not escape subjectivity's development, matters are not so easy. If the effect of modern subjectivity's intrusion into tragedy was to weaken its essential tie to substance, its effect on comedy's core, which is already subjectivity, is to dissociate comedy from the substantial altogether. The result, ultimately, will be the same: modern subjectivity loosens comedy's necessity and prevents it from depicting the reunification that sensuously embodies the Idea.

Hegel enumerates several of subjectivity's effects on comedy. The most obvious is that modern comedy follows New Comedy, as described in Chapter 3, in depicting personal affairs and domestic intrigue. Whereas Strepsiades's self-negating aims served to expose sophistry's corrosive effect on public life, modern comedies limit themselves to the trivialities of domestic affairs. Like New Comedies and modern tragedies, then, they do not attempt to depict humans' reunification with the divine and so are already a weakened form of art. Hegel phrases his lament specifically in terms of this lost unity: "a frank joviality as pervades the comedies of Aristophanes *as a constant reconciliation* does not animate this kind of modern comedy at all" (*Ä:III*, 571/1235, italics mine). We can imagine Hegel making this kind of judgment of most contemporary comedy, whether it be sitcoms (which certainly have their roots in New Comedy) or romantic comedies.

Also like modern tragedies, modern comedies lack necessity. As examples, Hegel references tragicomedies of his time in which "some blackguard or rascal" follows his own moral compass, untethered to any objective moral criteria. Given the arbitrary nature of the protagonist's convictions, such comedies easily end with the character's conversion to the good. But since this change tracks no necessary development in his character, the transformation seems superficial and implausible (*Ä:III*, 569/1233). As another substitute for real necessity, some modern plays further develop New Comedy's propensity for ingenious plotlines driven by cunning deception and far-fetched coincidence.

In Old Comedy, characters' aims were themselves necessarily self-negating: laughable to begin with and just as laughably pursued. Modern comedies sometimes also reflect a lack of necessity by featuring aims that fail to be self-negating in this sense. As an example, Hegel references the eponymous protagonist in Molière's *Tartuffe*, a religious hypocrite intent on defrauding his hosts. Tartuffe's aims are not inherently self-negating and neither are his means: he is instead a "downright villain" whose aims are "deadly serious" and whose means are distressingly plausible (*Ä:III*, 570/1234).[33] He is not reconciled to his failure, and we are not reconciled to him. This lack of necessity in turn undermines the cheerfulness that Hegel claimed should characterize comedy. Tartuffe's mixture of serious aims and spitefulness means we are never laughing with him but only at him (*Ä:III*, 569/1234). Many of modern comedy's stock characters suffer the same fate: "honest masters, fathers, and trustees" are put at the "mercy of the projects of other people" (*Ä:III*, 571/1235). They cannot join in the laughter; their hapless good intentions are only mocked. There is a difference, Hegel concludes, between comedies in which "the dramatis personae are comical themselves or only in the eyes of the audience"; "the former case alone," he concludes, "can be counted as really comical" (*Ä:III*, 552/1220). It is not clear, then, that plays such as *Tartuffe* are even comedies in this technical sense.

In any event, what passes for modern comedy, Hegel complains, is often moralizing, superficial, and cruel. When modern playwrights are not up to the task of evoking a higher sense of our unity with the world, they instead "seek to reform the public or merely to entertain it" with complicated plots or thrilling effects (*Ä:III*, 533/1204–1205). Predictably, Hegel calls this way of treating comedy prosaic. It does not depict the Idea in sensuous form; generally, then, the work simply ceases to be art. If this is the case, Hegel's question remains: why indeed not prefer dramas with happy endings? To art's modern lack of necessity, an arbitrary preference is, ironically, perhaps the only systematically consistent response.

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[33] The limited sourcing for modern comedy comes primarily from H26, 457–458. Although space does not allow me to discuss it here, I am grateful to Martin Donougho for bringing another example of Hegel's discussion of modern comedy to my attention, namely a review Hegel wrote in 1826 of Ernst Raupach's *Die Bekehrten*. Scholarship on this play includes Kraft (2010) and Hebing (2015), 266–275.

So what can this analysis tell us about the end of art and comedy's place in that end? First, Kaminsky is certainly not correct to see in *all* comedy only a frivolous distraction. Hegel took Aristophanes extremely seriously, seeing in his comedies a reckoning with the dangers of a subjectivity as yet unincorporated into ethical life and a model of cheerful reunification that shows humans to be powerful and free.[34] But this status only becomes clear when we recognize comedy as a subgenre of drama, drama as a genre of poetry, and poetry as the culmination of the romantic arts. Put in this context, the structural importance of necessity and the re-emergence of subjectivity make comedy's prominence apparent.

Hotho's edition provides, in its final pages, another tantalizing possibility. Hegel, by Hotho's account, says that "the modern world has developed a type of comedy which is truly comical and truly poetic. Here once again the keynote is good humour, assured and careless gaiety despite all failure and misfortune, exuberance and the audacity of a fundamentally happy craziness, folly and idiosyncrasy in general" (*Ä:III*, 572/1235). He follows this with a line that, as Kottman points out, after twelve hundred pages of scholarly pontification on everything from Zoroastrianism to Greek pillars to poetic meters, can only make us laugh: "As a brilliant example of this sort of thing," Hotho reports Hegel saying, "I will name Shakespeare once again, in conclusion, but without going into detail" (*Ä:III*, 572/1236).[35] There is no evidence in his students' lecture notes that he made this claim, but it is, I think, consistent with his philosophy of art otherwise. Some of Shakespeare's comedies certainly take up substantial themes, allow their villains to laugh at themselves and be reconciled with others, and show humans achieving a sense of responsibility for their own norms.[36] In these cases, Shakespeare achieves a synthesis of aesthetic and philosophical achievements: his plays cannot be beautiful in the perfectly unified way that classical sculpture was, but they accomplish a new kind of unity that includes division and so better gives the Idea sensuous form. We have seen that Hegel is often silent on how art continues in specific phenomena after he has defined its systematic end. Again, I believe this is because he thinks he has articulated what the criteria for successful art in the modern world will be. The rest can be left to artists and to art historians.

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[34] Harris also points out that insofar as the Greeks could see that Aristophanes had introduced an aesthetic form that exposed the tensions indicating Athens' decline, theirs was a tragic laughter (Harris 1997, 647). On comedy as exposing social and political problems while continuing to end in reconciliation, see Huddlestone (2014).

[35] Kottman (2018), 269.

Drama is the highest art in the sense that it achieves a reconciliation, an ultimate unity of unity and division, fundamental to Hegel's entire philosophy. It brings together the other art forms, rectifying the limitations of both painting and music by showing, in as clear a sensuous form as possible, the re-emergence of subjectivity in action. By showing embodied action, it reunites spirit and nature. Modern playwrights are still capable of achieving this possibility, in our age as well as Hegel's. But many will not, as illustrated by the several ways dramatic poetry ends. It ends when its conclusions are unnecessarily cruel or provide no reconciliation. It ends when it becomes too much like the novels that, as Hegel argued with the example of *Wilhelm Meister*, risk becoming too prosaic both in plot and language. Perhaps the most vivid image of art's ending is of the actor whose lines are no longer poetic and who simply expresses himself. In such cases, Hegel seems to imagine, there is no more *Schein*, no more elevation of the everyday into the spiritual, and art simply becomes life.

With comedy, Hegel then says, we have reached the "real end of our philosophical inquiry" (*Ä:III*, 572/1236). The individual arts have developed from architecture's externality through sculpture's individuality to the evolving subjectivity of the romantic arts. Poetry is the culmination of the individual arts generally and the romantic subjective arts in particular; drama is the synthesis of epic and lyric poetry.

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[36] *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are two examples. Shakespeare's comedies certainly also include unreconciled villains such as *Twelfth Night*'s Malvolio and *Much Ado About Nothing*'s Don John. The difficulties of defining Shakespeare's plays as tragic or comic prompted A. W. Schlegel, for instance, to classify them as *Schauspiele* instead. See Gjesdal (2018), 265.

Dramatic poetry's own subgenres, tragedy and comedy, have reached their respective ends as well. Drama has brought subjectivity out of the retreat that began in painting and deepened in music and shown this subjectivity embodied in action. The individual arts have run their course; there is nowhere else, conceptually, for art to go. Together with the end of the particular arts in Part II, these two ends combine to conclude Hegel's analysis of art in general. It remains, then, to consider what this dialectical culmination means for art's future.

Conclusion

Aesthetic Experience and the Future of Art

However many times and in however many ways art ends in Hegel's philosophy, its mission continues. Just as after the "end of history," humans are still responsible for making freedom concrete, humans after the "end of art" must continue to make art that reflects the modern condition and our understanding of ourselves as embodied, sensing creatures. Hegel stipulates in his discussion of romantic arts what kind of content future art must have. He then shows how those criteria play out in individual arts. In each case, the way the individual art achieves Hegel's overarching goal will be different, but the result will always be the same. Art will allow us to experience the Idea sensuously.

Throughout this study, I have argued for acknowledging Hegel's different goals for Parts II and III. Part II shows us how humans express their understanding of freedom through particular worldviews; Part III shows us how each individual art contributes to our self-understanding. We have seen many instances in which Hegel's discussion of the individual arts also includes an analysis of human freedom in the social sense, whether in painting's bliss or comedy's celebration of a human divine. It would also be untrue to Hegel's holistic spirit to argue that these two goals are unrelated. In fact, they are mutually reinforcing. In both cases, Hegel encourages us to see ourselves as deeply interconnected with the world, whether that be through the norms our worldviews generate or the sensuous self-understanding the arts enable. In both cases, art is a way of helping us resist the given, whether that be by recognizing divine laws as human creation or by acknowledging our activity in sensuous experiences or feelings we thought were passive. Both components are necessary for us to be self-determining and free. Parts II and III show, then, a higher-order synthesis that makes Hegel's philosophy of art its own unity of unity and division.

Their distinction, to my mind, means that Hegel's philosophy has the resources to analyze art understood as an expression of a worldview in the social-political sense but also art that draws our attention to more abstract questions about sensual content. To return to examples I used in the Introduction, he thus gives us a model for understanding Kara Walker's silhouettes or Glenn Ligon's stencils, or, as Torsen suggests, Louise Bourgeois and Lynda Benglis's evocations of the body. But he also provides a model for understanding architecture that encourages us to re-think our conceptions of gravity, visual art that allows us to see color and shape anew, music that challenges received understandings of sound's significance, and drama that unsettles our understandings of action or personhood. Any list I give of artists who realize such possibilities will be necessarily superficial. But it is true that a painting like Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* prompts us to contemplate motion's dimensionality and to wonder how our perceptual capacities, combined with cultural and historical factors, allow us to see a time-honored artistic image—a nude—even in extreme abstraction. Artists such as Alexander Calder, Agnes Martin, Helen Frankenthaler, and John Cage de-center and disrupt our perceptions; in so doing, they challenge visual norms and draw our attention to the ways in which we form and are formed by the sensuous world. Such art, in short, reminds us that if we assume colors or sounds are simply in the world waiting to be perceived, we discount our own participation in the existence even of things that seem objectively independent of us. In Hegel's terms, such art offers a vision of our unity with the world and so is a sensuous embodiment of the Idea.

Major questions remain. What would Hegel make of photography's deceptive realism? How would he have interpreted film's visual and dramatic potential? Where would he place sound art, or videography, or performance art? What about other hybrid forms that challenge our definition of individual arts altogether? Hegel's commitment to a systematic hierarchy should discourage us from imagining him able to accommodate all of contemporary art's multiplicity. But his description of art as able to bring our mutual formation of the world to our attention through our senses might enrich our experience of any of these. It might enable us to ask what about our worldview such arts reveal or highlight our senses in new ways that allow us the joy of recognizing our participation in art's very existence.

But what exactly is the source of that joy, commonly known as aesthetic experience? Hegel never says. But I have argued throughout that Hegel presents us with an aesthetics of truth, and that aesthetic experience is the pleasure derived from experiencing that truth sensuously. The truth itself is the network of claims that characterize Hegel's idealism. An aesthetic experience on Hegel's view, then, is a moment in which I sense the deep mutual formation underlying all of reality: whether that is in recognizing a truth about my worldview or a truth about my self-understanding. When we experience wonder and exhilaration upon encountering an artwork, what we are witnessing, however unconsciously, is a recognition of ourselves through the strangeness of art. Something strikes us as true, and that truth is that we suddenly intuit ourselves in something we thought was given. This can happen in explicitly social ways, for instance when an artwork uncovers something accurate but unacknowledged about ourselves and our society. But it can also happen when a chaotic montage prompts a sense of postmodern disjunction in which we recognize our own disjointed sense of the world, or when the interplay of video and sound causes us to reflect on how our senses work together.

Hegel's theory suggests that part of art's pleasure, too, is in knowing that there are humans who can transform what they see into a new creation—playwrights who can turn happenings into plots, painters who can capture personality in pigment. Aesthetic experience also includes the joy of seeing the richness of interpretation that we and other humans produce: the meaning we create through interacting with an artwork that sometimes outstrips even the artist's intention. All of these aspects of art, Hegel suggests, allow us to reflect explicitly what we otherwise do implicitly: mutually form reality with others and our surroundings. Aesthetic experience for Hegel is a moment of deep connectedness and wholeness: a sense of the mutual formation we otherwise engage in habitually and unconsciously. Religion and philosophy articulate this fact to us more overtly. But art articulates it sensuously and, in so doing, helps us reflect on the deeper reality that is the Idea and the sensuously embodied part of that reality that we are.

We are also now in a better position to understand how interpreting Hegel's aesthetics as an aesthetics of truth does not return us to a rationalist aesthetics in which art attempts to track independent, eternal ideals such as perfection or harmony. Hegel's philosophical system consists instead of an activity through which the most basic entities evolve and shift. I think Bowie, to repeat, is right to suggest that music allows us to feel new emotions, themselves made available by new social situations, and so shifts what it means to be a subject at all. Something similar is true in the other arts, as Pippin's analysis of Manet's paintings also suggests. We could imagine how other new sensual experiences could make our very conceptions of space, shape, and action evolve. Hegel would always want such experiences to bring us back to a sense of our mutual formation with the world. Insofar as they do, they count as art.

The idea that aesthetic experience tracks Hegel's conception of philosophical truth is, it must be admitted, strange. It is probably no stranger than Kant's claim that aesthetic experience is caused, unbeknownst to us, by our pleasure in the play of our faculties. Nor is it less intuitive than Kandinsky's claim that art's power is caused, again unbeknownst to us, by spiritual truths embodied in shape and color. Nevertheless, Hegel's philosophical system can be a major barrier to the adoption of his insights. I have not tried to downplay those barriers here. Hegel was a deeply systematic thinker, and we will not make sense of his philosophy if we deny that. I have also tried, however, to indicate moments when I think his analysis of art and of aesthetic experience is insightful, whether we are convinced by his idealism or not. The pleasure of experiencing our own senses, or seeing a fact about our worldview powerfully embodied, suggests, to my mind, that Hegel articulated something true about the role art plays in our modern lives.

Art's history, conceptual development, and its classification into artistic genres are all, to Hegel's mind, evidence of this truth. "The universal need for art," Hegel suggested, "is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self" (*Ä:I*, 51/31). This task of self-reflection and self-recognition will continue as long as humans are the amphibious creatures we have become. Art under this description has, indeed, everything left to do. History is not over, and neither is art. How they continue is up to us.

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